

The Pun

free!

...for punters

Tripod Trio Triumphs



Inside...

Interviews

Michael Chamberlin
Andrew McClelland
Christina Adams
Score Reloaded

Regular Features

I am not a comedy junkie!
Best of the Internationals
Doin' it for the Kids

Reviews Galore

Ross Noble
Courteney Hocking
Wil Anderson
plus plenty more...

Tripod

talks to Lefa Singleton

TRIPOD have long been festival favourites. For years they have been a show punters are happy to shell out hard earned money for, knowing full well that they were guaranteed to laugh their way through an hour. Somehow combining a steady, reliable show with ever-changing material which always never feels stale. This year they return to a cabaret style, an hour of songs and banter which only has one theme: funny.

Scod will take to the stage each night to sing up a storm with Yon and Gatesy, but he's also going to be appearing elsewhere

during the festival. "It's going to be a busy year, that's for sure" he agrees, "It's just great to have a month full of gigs". With shows each week as part of the *Midnight Trade* season at Trades Hall with band Scott Edgar and the Universe, extra gigs outside the festival at The Artery and if that wasn't enough he's also joining Cam Bruce and various guests to bring Bob Dylan songs to the masses with *Dirt Road Blues*. With the Dylan show requiring the performers to learn new music, arrange songs and organize their collaborations, it's difficult logistically and requires a large amount of preparation for a once off performance. The challenge is something Scod is looking forward to though, given that it is a fun departure from his usual musical stylings. "If nothing else I'm going to be a better guitarist by the end of the festival" laughs Scod.

I am not a comedy junkie!

by Mel Campbell

SPRUICKING your show outside the Town Hall. It's a terrible job, but with so many shows on at the Festival and so many punters milling about looking for ideas, it's one of the best ways to get bums on seats. So someone has to do it. And if you're an up-and-coming local comedian, that someone is usually you.

Every year there's a story in *The Age* about the sorry lot of small-time local comedians. The way they run up horrendous credit card debts and support themselves with menial part-time jobs. The way they play to three people a night or cancel their

Reviewed in this edition:

- \$6.99 kg
- 2 for 1 Live at the Comics Lounge
- Aaron Keeffe and the Artist Formerly Known as Harry
- The Adventures of Captain Frodo - Tales of a Modern Day Showman
- An Unfortunate Woman
- Andrew McClelland's Mix Tape
- Ang Fang live with Charlie Chaplin's The Gold Rush
- Be My (Kent) Valentine
- Ben Chisholm in 'Don't Tell Mum'
- Birdmannifesto: Night of the Birdman
- Charlie Pickering: Auto
- Cliffy is Relaxed and Comfortable
- Corrine Grant: Faking It
- Courtney Hocking's Foolish Ideas and Crackpot Inventions Show
- Dave Hughes: Hughesy Rides Again
- The Dead Set
- Deliberations of a Disco Diva
- Dizney on Dry Ice
- The Gala (on TV)
- Glenn Wool: Where Is Hell?
- Goddess Wanted: Must Provide Own Pedestal
- Hard to Swallow
- Harley Breen: Son of a Preacher Man
- Hip Hop 4 Dummeez
- Hot New Comics Showcase
- I Know What You Did Last Monday
- Insert Name Here
- The Jaundice Table
- Janet A. McLeod presents Local Laughs
- Josephine O'Reilly: SHOWJO
- LaLaLuna
- Lano and Woodley: Good Bye
- Late Night Impro
- Lawrence Leung: The Marvellous
- Misadventures of Puzzle Boy
- Levlland
- Mark Watson: 50 Years Before Death and the Awful Prospect of Eternity
- The Mathematical Revolution
- Monsieur Camembert
- Natives Strikin' Blak
- Nik Coppin: Spiders, man!
- Oh
- Rachel Berger: Loose Cannon
- A Porthole into the Minds of the Vanquished
- Ramblings
- Richard McKenzie: Digger
- Rich Hall & Mike Wilmot
- Ridiculusmus: The Importance of Being Earnest
- Roadhouse
- Rock Plus Roll
- Ross Noble: Randomist
- Sam Bowring in The Wishes of Children
- A Son of Your Own
- The Steamers
- Spymonkey's Cooped
- Tom Gleeson: Non Stop Tom
- Two Collars
- Vena Und Schnitzel's World Calypso Experience Tonight!
- Wendy Little in Limited Sedition
- What's New Peter Costello Whoa Whoa!
- Wil Anderson: Wil Communication
- Zack Adams: A Complete History of Zack Adams

THE PUN : FOR PUNTERS

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The Pun wish to acknowledge that we are on indigenous ground - this land is the spiritual and sacred place of the Wurrundjeri, Bunurong, Woiwurrung and Wathurong ancestors and continues to be a place of significance for all people of the Kullin nations. Further, we thank them for sharing this land with us and agree to respect their laws and lores.

Reviewed in Edition One: Adam Hills: Characterful, Adam McKenzie in I know You Are But What Am I?, Andy Muirhead is... Perky?, Arj Barker: Unmitigated, Barb Joseph: So I Married An Arab, The Beautiful Losers, Ben Payne in Duopoly of One, Best of the Edinburgh Fest, Big Laugh Out, Bombay to Beijing by Bicycle, Burlesque Idol, Call Girls, Christina Davis: The Secret Diaries of Unnamed Fraser, COM ED OKE' & The 48 Hour World Record Attempt, Comedy Knockout Presents, The Crew Presents Instant Musical Odyssey, Damian Callinan has Spaznuts, Daniel Kitson, David O'Doherty: Grown Up, Dr Earnest Parrot Presents Demetri Martin, Dylan Moran Live!, Fangs and Fetish, Freestyle Love Supreme, Fran and Roxanne Are Best Friends, Geraldine Hickey in 'One Week in Paradise', Geraldine Quinn: Bad Ambassador, Greg Fleet: Word Up, Helen Thorn is Arty Farty, Hoodwinked: The Festival Spirit, Jason Burne: Out of the Box, Justin Hamilton: Smash!, The Kerry Packer Experience, Kieran Butler Claims 'Collingwood Ruined My Life', Lehmo: Christmas in Baghdad, Matt Elsbury is mAd., Matt vs The Advertising World, Michael Chamberlin: The 10 Commandments, Midnight Trade, Miriam and The Monkfish: A Live Cooking Show, Mon's Comedy Cooker, NAFF Film Festival, Penny Tangey in Kathy Smith Goes to Maths Camp, Peter Helliar: Frisky, Rain Pryor: Fried Chicken and Latkes, Rueben Krum is Out of Line, Rod Quantock's Australia!, Soubrettes & Friends Variety a Go Go, Space Cowboy's Mind Bending, Stephen K Amos, Tim Minchin, Tommy Dean: Somewhere In Between, Tripod in Self Saucing, Up There: Cal Wilson, Vaya Pashos is... Disconnected, Weekend Trade, The Wrong Night

For those of you who missed our first edition, these reviews are available online at www.thepun.com.au

EDITORIAL - Lefa Singleton

Welcome to The Pun, an independent publication published weekly during the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Unlike other street press, we don't offer reviews as part of an advertising package. We're tired of 'reviews' being thinly veiled press releases; currency exchanged for advertising dollars. We want you, the punter, to receive comprehensive, unbiased coverage of the festival. We're aiming to review every show.

We hope you enjoy our coverage. Please feel free to visit our website www.thepun.com.au and leave us your feedback.

Thanks to:

Penny and Mel for encouraging me to make the idea a reality, my amazing co-editor and designer Tim Norton who has supported above and beyond the call of duty, the unstoppable Jane Watkins, unflappable Chloe Walker and every volunteer who has made the publication happen. And of course, Ma 'n Pa.

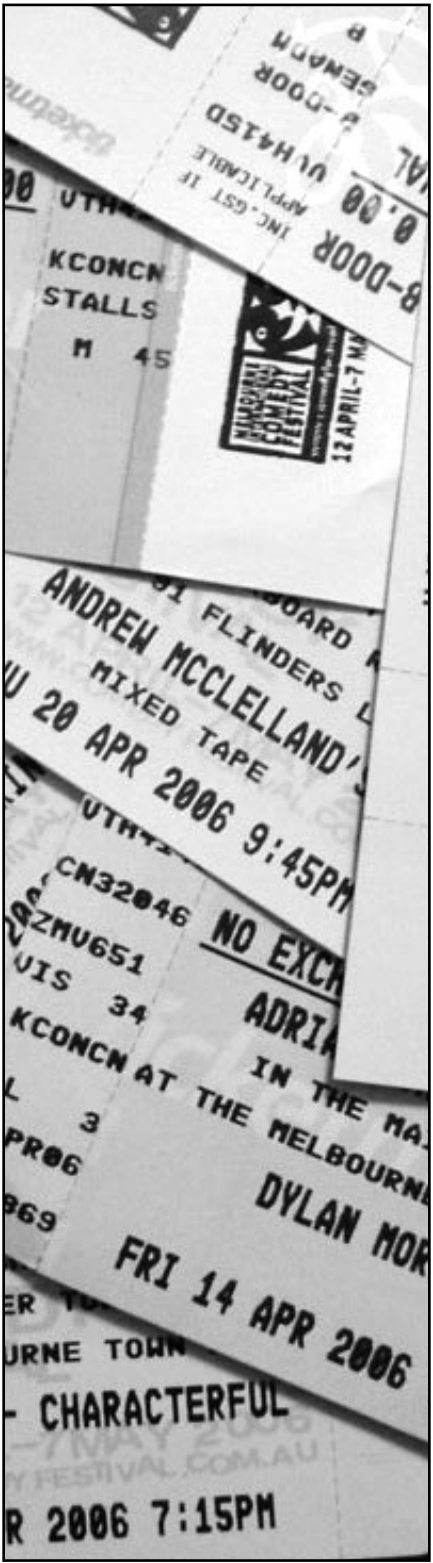
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Go You Big Red Fire Engine!

No Festival of Laughs

Richard Watts finds out how the Melbourne International Comedy Festival is really run



STAGING the Melbourne International Comedy Festival is no laughing matter. This year the Melbourne International Comedy Festival celebrates its 20th anniversary, with 233 individual events included in its broad program. For four weeks, international and local comedy superstars will rub shoulders with unheard-of hopefuls in a range of venues across the inner city, from Footscray Community Arts Centre to Federation Square.

Organising an event of this magnitude is no easy task, explains Susan Provan, the Festival director, and there's certainly no time to relax once things are actually under way.

‘The Festival is absolute bedlam,’ she says. ‘Meetings and administrative stuff all day every day, and then shows every evening. It feels incredibly daunting. I wake up at five o'clock each morning and think “Oh my god, I can't do it all.”’

Provan looks forward to the festival each year despite the stress, and believes that now more than ever it is an important cultural event, and one that provides a much needed antidote to the tense global times in which we presently live.

‘Most stand-up comedians talk about what's going on in their social and political environments and they do it in an amusing and often challenging fashion. I think this festival will contribute to that tradition. We've had some tricky festivals, like the one where we opened the same day as the Americans invaded Iraq; that was big,’ she laughs, ‘but clearly the more interesting times we live in, the more grist for the mill.’

While the festival hub is firmly focussed around Melbourne Town Hall and nearby venues, this year sees Carlton's Trades Hall playing a major new role. *Comedy @ Trades* brings together a range of local talents, from cabaret and vaudeville to cult cinema, and

even a women's response to *Puppetry of the Penis, B-Cupperry*, under the one roof.

‘The Town Hall precinct is focussed on international and high-profile stand-up, so what we're doing is quite different,’ explains Linda Catalano, the Artist and Program Manager for *Comedy @ Trades*. ‘We're creating a much more independent vibe that's focussed on things like music and circus. It's an alternative program. We want people who aren't so interested in stand-up to come and see something else that's funny, because humour is so much broader than that traditional comedy style.’

Tamlyn Henderson, who makes his Comedy Festival debut this year in the absurdist postmodern play *A Porthole into the Minds of the Vanquished* at the Town Hall, says that mounting a festival show involves enormous risks.

‘We've done the rounds at the Adelaide Fringe and then a season in Sydney, and now the Comedy Festival, and we've spent about \$20,000 staging the show all up,’ he says. ‘When you're really not sure if you're going to get any returns, that's really risky, but if you know it's what you want to do, you just hope that you can redeem some of that money somewhere.’

While the finances involved are daunting, Henderson says that their audience's responses make it all worthwhile.

‘It's been really amazing, especially the season we just finished in Sydney, which has put us in a great headspace for Melbourne. People have said that there's nothing like our show out there, which is really amazing to hear. One bloke told us afterwards that he'd developed a six-pack from laughing so hard. People have been pissing themselves basically.’

This article originally appeared in MCV #275 on Friday 14 April

shows because nobody came, while people queue around the block to see pretty, pretty Arj Barker tell jokes remarkably similar to those he told last year. (Later tonight at the bar, women will do a bit more queuing for pretty, pretty Arj Barker.)

But for my money, Town Hall spruiking is the ultimate humiliation. The big producers who handle the international acts and the local celebrities employ people to hand out flyers for their various shows. Some venues also send their own staff to promote the shows they’ve got on. These are the lucky spruikers, for they are allowed to wear normal clothes, speak in normal voices, and not mind when people reject their flyers.

Then there’s you. Imagine you’re forced to dress in the costume from your show, which looks more than a little out of place on the street, and give pithy, persuasive summaries—in character—of why passers-by should come along tonight. You have to do this again and again, interrupting people’s conversations, working the queues, amping up the hilarity as the hour of your show approaches. You must look on gaily as if it’s of no consequence that people are ignoring your winning smiles and outstretched flyers. And you must do this in rain, hail, and bitter, bitter cold.

But it’s not all bad. There’s a wonderful camaraderie among the local comedy spruikers. Everyone takes each other’s flyers and tries out their spiels on one another. There are twinkles in eyes as they line up on either side of the portico, forming a gauntlet for hapless punters to run.

Tempers flare, though. Last week one spruiker put another spruiker’s flyer on the ground and stamped on it because she didn’t like his show. Come on, guys. Play nice. After all, you’re in this together.

In this regular column, Mel Campbell will be covering the 2006 Melbourne International Comedy Festival’s hidden side.

Home Grown

by Lefa Singleton

**This week:
Michael Chamberlin**



MICHAEL CHAMBERLIN is taking on God with his show *Michael Chamberlin and the Ten Commandments* for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival this year. Not content with the oldest rules in the religious book, Chamberlin is convinced that they need some updating to make it in the modern world.

While others may do shows for the Festival based on climbing metaphoric or literal mountains, Chamberlin keeps close to his Catholic upbringing ‘I’ve never been trapped in the bush or contracted some exotic disease,’ he explains, ‘this was what I dealt with growing up.’ Those who have seen Chamberlin perform before will be used to hearing about his staunch and strict Catholic school story. This year though, he puts those years of religious education to good use in an attempt to refresh all the outdated messages

being taught in churches the world over.

So how does his Mum feel about his show, considering everyone’s favourite cultural commentator Andrew Bolt called his show ‘Christian-baiting’ (despite never having seen it)? ‘She’s actually pretty okay with it,’ says Chamberlin, ‘she’s more worried about me saying the C word. I have to justify it, point out that I only say it a couple of times for dramatic effect.’ The show is far from religion bashing, with the kind of commentary that can only come from the love/hate relationship you develop with a religion when it’s your own.

Writing comedy for ‘Rove Live’, performing stand-up and running successful comedy room *Stagetime* for another season keeps Chamberlin busy. The return of Stagetime was welcome for the local comedy scene, but Chamberlin feels it’s time for new people to step up to the challenge. ‘There’s a lot of merit to running a room. It’s a great way to get good time on stage. I want to see some new people start taking it on.’ There’s that level of stress associated with all of it though, Chamberlin equates doing a live show as part of the Comedy Festival or running a room to having a party. ‘You find yourself checking the door...are those people coming in here? Are we going to have an audience?’

For a performer who seems to have this show well and truly under control, Chamberlin talks at length about how difficult the show was for him to write. ‘I find it a really hard process, before I took it to Adelaide I really didn’t want to go. I kept thinking, “Maybe if I just step out in front of this bus I won’t have to go and do it.”’ When I voice surprise, commenting that I felt the show worked incredibly well, Chamberlin looked as if he were enjoying the performance immensely. He is happy to point out that he stays focused on the work at hand, ‘I don’t believe that a show is ever perfect. You just have to keep working at it and getting it better and better.’ His perfectionist streak certainly seems to be paying off with sell out shows and satisfied audiences.

With their television work on *SkitHouse* and now with Peter Hellier, radio on Triple J and live shows both here and overseas, the trio have reached massive audiences with work which is shaping up to be as strong musically as it is with comedy. Their singing voices seem to improve every year, as do their musical arrangements and instrument skills. From their awe-inspiring Radiohead finale a few years ago to Gatesy picking up the guitar this year, they are keeping their sound fresh and growing with every challenge they take on.

With strong seasons of *Self Saucing* already behind them, bringing the show to the festival in the small and cosy HiFi bar is something they are clearly enjoying. “We’ve just been having fun with it really” says Scod “we’ve now got Gatesy playing guitar on stage, which has been good and we’re doing mostly newer stuff”. The festival in their home town is obviously one they can take pleasure in and with shows selling out already, audiences are clearly happy to have them back again.





**RUM!
LOOSE WOMEN!
MAGICIANS!
UKELELE!
HULA DANCING!
FIRE!**



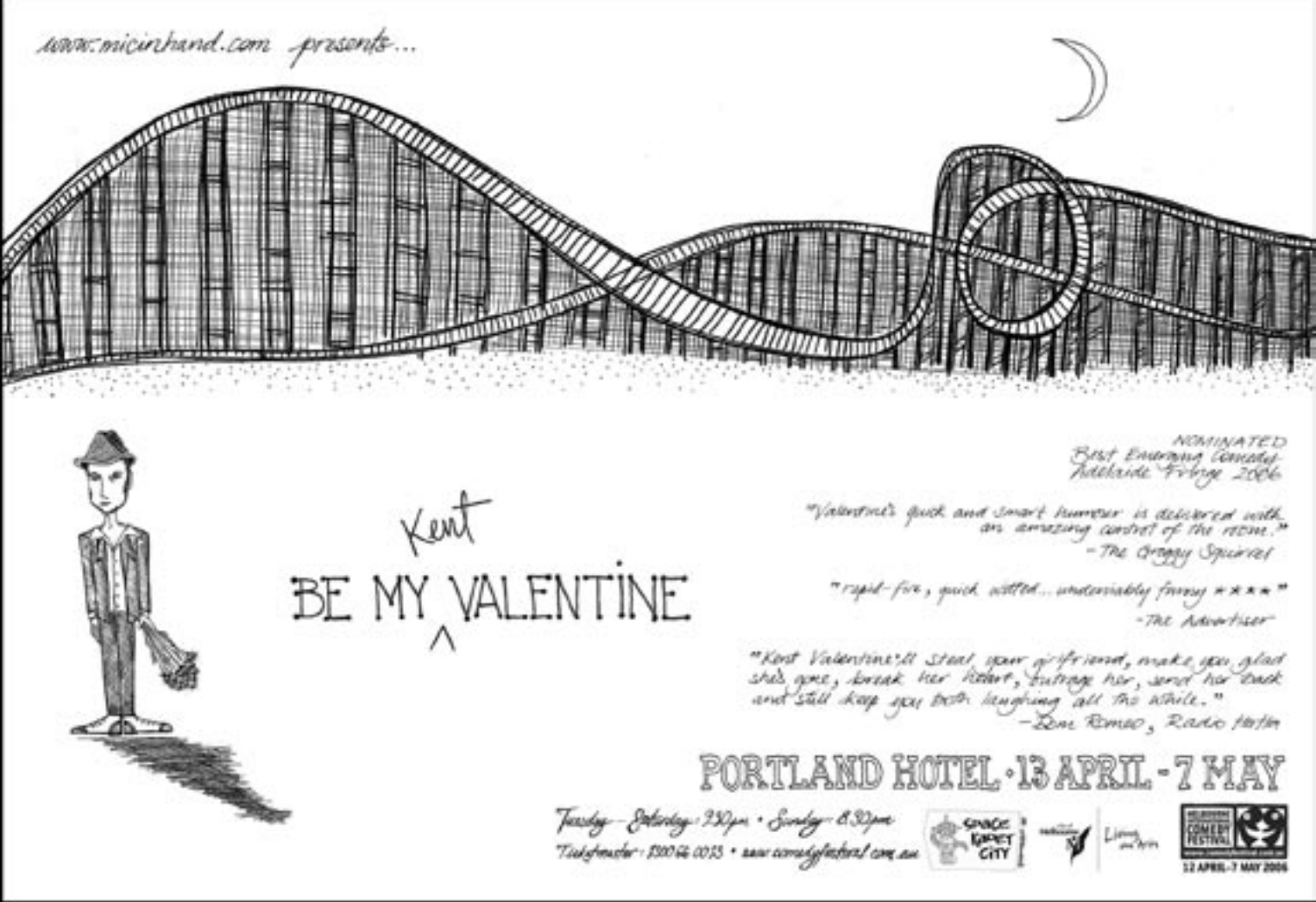
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

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BIG NAMES

WE KNOW, WE KNOW. You want to see the big name acts. Well, here's your quick round-up on what's hot and what's not on the international, local and 'other' scenes.

Adam Hills Good if: you're after a hearty laugh Bad if: you get off on seeing a comedian tear holes in his audience and the world	Judith Lucy Good if: you want to see an amazingly talented woman tell the story of a fall from the top Bad if: biting, satirical women intimidate you
Arj Barker Good if: you want a good, solid, International comedy act Bad if: you're tired of typical American humour	Lano & Woodley Good if: you used to be a fan of Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin Bad if: you don't want them to go – last show, ever
Daniel Kitson Good if: you share his view that the rest of the world is infuriatingly annoying Bad if: you're a cunt	Mark Watson Good if: you like debut performances from up and coming UK acts Bad if: you have a terminal disease
Dave Hughes Good if: Hughesy already floats your boat Bad if: you're not into that whole 'Aussie larrikin' thing	Pauly Shore Good if: you can recite the words perfectly to Encino Man Bad if: you want to pay just to hear The Weasel
Danny Bhoy Good if: you're female and into hot, funny men Bad if: you're male, on a first date with a female	Phil Kay Good if: you want to take your kids to enjoy the festival too Bad if: you don't have any kids to drag along
Demetri Martin Good if: you're down with New York humour with a surreal twist Bad if: you're after straight 'blokey' stand-up	Rain Pryor Good if: you like something a little more theatrical Bad if: you wanted to see her father, Richard Pryor
Dylan Moran Good if: an abusive Irishman hits your good spot Bad if: you wanted to see Black Books Live	Rich Hall & Mike Wilmot Good if: you're a sadist Bad if: you're easily offended
Freestyle Love Supreme Good if: you're in the mood for madcap physical comedy Bad if: you prefer your stand-up straight	Rod Quantock Good if: you're down with intelligent, informed comedy Bad if: your idea of politics is Fitzroy vs. Essendon
The Glass House Good if: you want to be on the ABC Bad if: you think you're leaving your TV for a night out	Ross Noble Good if: you want to take the whole family to a solid, well rehearsed spectacular Bad if: you're after an intimate, cosy stand-up gig
Glenn Wool Good if: moody Canadians are your thing Bad if: you still can't tell the difference between them and 'other Americans'	Scared Weird Little Guys Good if: you like your comedy served with a side of music Bad if: you wish it was either music OR comedy
Greg Fleet Good if: you want the best that home grown talent has to offer Bad if: sorry, we can't think of one	Stephen K Amos Good if: a solid UK act commenting on the rest of the world appeals to you Bad if: you're tired of the influx of UK comedians
Jason Byrne Good if: you crave totally crazy, fast paced Irish comedy Bad if: you have a heart condition	Tripod Good if: you like goofy music that makes you giggle Bad if: you've just got the hots for Gatesy (bad for you, that is)
Jimeon Good if: you're a long-time fan Bad if: you're sick of the schtick	Umbilical Brothers Good if: physical comedy and clowning are a good night out for you Bad if: you're tired of noises made on a microphone
Joan Rivers Good if: you're up for seeing an icon Bad if: you're after something different	Wil Anderson Good if: you've been missing him since the Breakfast Show on Triple J went off air Bad if: you're glad he went off air

Flying Solo



EACH EDITION of The Pun, this column will feature a virgin performer sharing their experiences putting on their first solo show in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

Geraldine Hickey

WHAT'S it like doing a solo show in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for the first time? It's a nightmare, but a nightmare where you wake up and realise that a peanut butter sandwich wanting to give you a massage is not as scary as you once thought.

The first week of the festival has been a bit surreal. I am also working full-time as a manager at King Pin bowling at the Casino. This means I've been doing the show, then going to work and finishing at eight in the morning. By the time I got into bed on Friday morning, after opening night, I had slept for 1.5 hours since Wednesday afternoon. That's 48 hours! 1.5 hours sleep in 48 hours. Can someone please get me a coffee?

But I am getting into the rhythm of things now. Except for flyering: I consider this to be the most soul crushing thing I have ever had to do in my life. This show is something that I have poured my heart and soul into, and I've had to compress it all onto a little piece of paper, and then hand it out to random strangers. Only to have them look at it, give me a dirty look and then deliberately go out of their way to avoid me.

Other than that, everything is going well. I'm happy with the show, and learning and growing more as a performer each night. However, I do look forward to a beer or two at the end of it, and a big sleep in as well.

Sitdown not Standup



SINCE its inception in 2001, *The Crew* has performed over two-hundred shows, seen its members proceed to successful performing careers and in the process established itself as the longest running and most successful weekly improv show in Australia.

But this is hardly the time to get lazy.

‘We’ve spent the majority of the last four years doing short-form, which is often described as “jumping through hoops for the audience”,’ says Rob Lloyd, *The Crew’s* Artistic Director. ‘Then late last year we decided to use 2005 to explore new and challenging forms of improv, to plant some seeds for experimentation and make things more interesting for us and our audiences.’

Such was the inspiration behind *Instant Musical Odyssey*, *The Crew’s* festival show. Evolving from a ten minute warm-up

THE COMEDY FESTIVAL is full of performances that don’t quite fit the bill of standup. Here, we pay tribute to those acts.

by Jenny Wynter

game, the show blends several different short-form improv formats with song to produce an hour of musical storytelling.

From an initial collection of scenes where actors take turns offering a character, the audience decides which character’s story they’d like to see fleshed out. Narrated by Musical Director Dan Walmsley, a musically charged story ensues with genres, styles and other ideas all being audience led.

‘So far we’ve done a musical presenting the story of a vampire and its arch-nemeses the slayers, and another about a goat on a quest to find its name... so really it can go anywhere!’

Started after the 2001 Comedy Festival as a playful Sunday hang-out for comedians at The Comic’s Lounge, *The Crew* quickly gathered unexpected momentum until, Rob says, ‘we realised

we could achieve some goals from this.’ Five years later and their weekly show Impro Sundae still attracts regular fans.

‘I think what excites audiences is that it is all completely made up on the spot, and there’s a real danger in that, which we really embrace. We like to show the mechanics of it, show the minds working and the challenge of it. I think there’s a temptation to make impro look too perfect—but the audience doesn’t want to see perfection, they want to see the challenge. That’s the thrill.’

And what makes a good improviser? ‘Those who make the the other person look good, who just “do” and don’t “think” too much, and above all, who aren’t afraid to show their personality on stage. Audiences don’t want airs and graces, then there’s nothing to relate to. You have to be smart, confident and funny—and yourself.”

Doin’ it for the Kids

by Tim Norton



YOU’VE GOT KIDS, and rather than dump them with Grandma, you’d really like to take them out to a show. But how do you gauge what is kid-friendly? In this column, we interview performers that are all about kids, teenagers and growing up.

This week: Score Reloaded

IF you’re into musical comedy, you’re gonna love this one. 90 members of the Melbourne Youth Orchestra pack the Melbourne Town Hall to perform alongside comedians including Scared Weird Little Guys, Russell Fletcher as Danny Kaye, Genevieve Clifford and Nicholas Buc. According to Dhari Vij, who plays double bass in the orchestra, it’s an experience they’re unsure how to handle. ‘Our rehearsals are made up of comedians cracking jokes.’ Ranging from Mozart to John Williams, *Score Reloaded* is basically a war on music, performed live on stage in front of hundreds. The involvement of so many budding musicians like Vij is refreshing to see amidst the International and Australian

comedians that crowd stages throughout the festival. With *Score Reloaded* being a one-off gig, rehearsals are incredibly important to all those involved. ‘We’ve been practicing every Saturday, and it’s been going great so far,’ says Vij, who is looking forward to the eventual performance. ‘It’s great to work alongside comedians rather than musicians for a change.’ It all makes for an out of the ordinary performance. ‘There are some weird things going on in this performance’ says Vij, ‘mostly involving a vacuum cleaner and some hoses.’ This is definitely an all-ages show for the whole family, with a touch of the bizarre that’s sure to entertain.

ANDREW MCCLELLAND

chats to Tim Norton



WHILE you’re watching Andrew McClelland up on stage, you might recognise him from his stints on radio, in the DJ booth or cutting sick on the dance floor. For this fervent comedian, all these passions combine into an inspiring Comedy Festival show. He loves music. That seems to be the basis for the Comedy Festival show *Andrew McClelland’s Mix Tape*. No philosophical meaning, no in-depth analysis or long-winded story about a bad experience with a tape deck. It’s a refreshing thought; McClelland is just passionate about his music, and wanted to find a way to tell his audience exactly what it is that makes the perfect mix tape. ‘Usually I find a topic that I’m interested in as an excuse to research it. It’s the research I love.’ Looking back over McClelland’s past shows involving secret societies and pirates, it’s easy to see the love he pours into his topics. When I spoke to McClelland he was busy in preparation for his show, stressing out and rereading scripts. ‘I stress naturally, it’s just part of my routine.’ But this

disappears once he takes the stage, being replaced with a powerful enthusiasm that ripples through the audience. You might not have seen McClelland’s show yet, but you’ll have certainly seen him on a dance floor around Melbourne. A regular DJ at venues such as Weekender, McClelland is a regular deck-spinner at Umbrella Revolution during the Festival, and apologises to anyone he may have accidentally fly-kicked at a Lucksmiths gig. In his own (rather made up) words, McClelland is bang-passionate about comedy, particularly the close-knit world that it creates. He is quick to point out his best tips for other shows in the Festival, including *Lawrence Leung in The Adventures of Puzzle Boy*, *Courteney Hocking’s Foolish Ideas and Crackpot Inventions Show*, *Christine Adams: Alive in Madagascar* and *Jo Randerson’s Skazzle Dazzle*. Hopefully he’ll stress less about his own show long enough to sit down and have a listen to his own mix tape.



Ladies Corner

Paul D’Agostino catches up with Christina Adams



How is your Festival going?
Good. I’m enjoying myself but I’m getting a bit tired, as I’m sure all comedians are, at this point.

I’ve checked out your schedule and it seems like you’re doing pretty much every night?
Yeah. I’m working full-time as well.

Are you a masochist?
Yeah I am actually. So I’m basically trying to do a little bit too much at the moment I think.

You work as a teacher I believe?
Yeah. I do. Pretty much everything I do requires my voice.

Wouldn’t it be easier to write everything up on the board and just point to it?
It’s tempting just to show videos at the moment. But I guess I have to do my two jobs.

This is your second Festival, are you finding it easier this time around?
Yes and no. Like I think last year because it was my first solo show, you sort of go into it with no real expectations. I mean you sort of hope it goes well, but you’ve got nothing to compare it to. Whereas, this year, the pressures on a little bit because, I did win the award last year—

Yes I came across that in my research.
Yeah so there’s sort of a little bit of ‘Ooo, what has she come up with? Was she a one-hit wonder or what?’ So I felt like there was a little bit more of an eye on me this year I suppose.

What could Joe Regular expect to see if they came and watched your show, *Alive in Madagascar*?
It’s quite a strange kind of show, not in a bad way strange. But I guess it’s basically a story of a trip to Madagascar, but there are a lot of different characters who pop up during the show. So I guess people do

learn a little bit about Madagascar, as well as see a fairly bizarre story unfold because the American people I was staying with were all taking an anti-malarial drug that made them hallucinate in fairly bizarre ways. Americans are prone to strange behaviour anyway, but, when they’re actually on drugs that make them do that it was a fairly interesting experience.

Any hecklers this year?
No I haven’t actually. I’ve had some groups of teachers, who’ve come from a bit of a carry-over crowd from last year and some of them have been a little bit drunk, so I’ve been their big social get-together. And I did have one couple getting it on in my show.

Really?
Yeah, I’m glad I set the scene for them. They were on really high chairs, and it was kind of noticeable, so I had to keep ignoring them, so I was getting a bit stressed.

How did it feel winning the best newcomer award last year?
Very exciting. Not something I expected at all, I guess it was a big honour because every year there are so many shows and everyone has put a lot of time and effort into it, so, to get recognised out of a group of people who have all been working really hard is a great honour.

Are you going to blame the Commonwealth Games for the hectic schedule you’ve had to have?
No. I choose not to think too much about sport and I hope that with the people who want to see my show there isn’t a huge crossover between the people who were chanting at the athletics.

It’s possible that all those athletes that escaped the village could be lining up?
They might be. I haven’t noticed any of them, but they might have wanted to escape just to see my show.

HEY, I KNOW THAT GUY!

by Lefa Singleton

YOU KNOW YOU’VE seen that comic before somewhere, but where? Was it on TV, in a Kellog’s ad or down at your local supermarket? The Pun reveals all...



FAMILIAR faces and voices abound in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Here’s just a bit of info to help you place where you’ve seen and heard them before.

Andy Muirhead—That happy chappy from ‘Collectors’ is also an incredibly talented stand-up comic. His show, *Andy Muirhead is...Perky* shows off his day job.

Dave Callan—Surely you’ve heard his dulcet tones on triple j? Part Irish, part mad (in the best possible way), Callan returns to the festival this year with *The Sunshine Factory (Part Two)*. Considering Part One was hailed as quite the success, it’s probably worth catching it this time round.

Adam Hills—Music host by night, comedy all-star by...other nights. ‘Spicks and Specks’ host Hills will make you laugh over more than just music in his show *Characterful*.

Christina Davis—Most known for her days on ‘Big Brother’, this smiling face presents a stand-up show *Christina Davis – The Secret Diaries of Unnamed Fraser*, showing she has far more interesting material than reality TV to talk about.

Adam Richard—Yes, he’s Fabulous, and if he floats your boat with his gossip and bitching on FoxFM, you’re sure to enjoy a full hour of his shtick.

Greg Fleet—He’s done radio, sure, but he’s old school comedy mafia. He’s da man and, while you may have liked hearing him on any of the airwaves, he has far more passion and pull on stage I assure you. Now let him tell you all about it in *Word*

Up where he talks about talking.

Helen Thorn—Did you catch ‘Vulture’? Well that smart lady talking about Art, she’s doing it for an hour at the festival. *Helen Thorn is Arty Farty* is all about Helen Thorn. And Art.

Charlie Pickering—Another familiar voice, Pickering has been heard on triple j but is much more entertaining in an hour where he shares his own stories in *Auto*.

Justin Hamilton—You’ve seen him on ‘The Glass House’ (Well I have, anyway.) and heard him on triple j, but to us he will always be that kick-arse comic who comes up with an hour of solid gold material each year. *Justin Hamilton...Smash!* is pretty much what it says, a smash.

There’s a rash of talented comics who worked their butts off on TV series ‘skitHOUSE’, which was really a distraction from their other funny work: Australian Fast Bowler **Tom Gleeson** in *Non Stop Tom*, **Tripod** singing up a storm in *Self Saucing*, **Cal Wilson** discarding her New Zealand rugby-loving ways to explore all things AFL in *Up There*, **Cal Wilson**, **Damian Callinan** laughing it up with not one but two shows (*Damian Callinan has Spaznuts* and *Damian Callinan is Babysitting*) and **Michael Chamberlin** spreading the holy word in *Michael Chamberlin and the Ten Commandments*.

The Pinch—These lads may take over your fave local radio station, 3RRR, but they also weave their live magic at festivals over Melbourne. This year they combine both with a live broadcast in *The Pinch: Radiolive*.

Andy Muirhead is...

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For \$6.99 I can get a kilo of mince from my local butchers. That does me for both a spag-bol and a taco night. Now that's what I call tasty value. So when I saw a Comedy Festival show called *\$6.99 kg* I immediately began to salivate in a base Pavlovian response.

Offering up five tasty morsels of raw Australian talent in the form of Pete Sharkey, Dana Katz, Dean Eizenberg, Clare Turner and Kieren Yap, *\$6.99 kg* is served up in The Amber Lounge in a sort of yum cha assortment of comedic titbits.

While these five young lambs may have been a little underdone in places, the shaky nerves and confidence in their material should improve in flavour as they marinate throughout the festival (ok, last food pun metaphor).

Clare Turner as MC held the show together particularly well and the decent sized crowd, who were coaxed in from the street, were eager to be entertained and forgiving of the flat bits. I particularly enjoyed the enthusiasm of Sharkey and Yap's one-liners.

It's interesting to see young performers finding their voice and hopefully discovering the fearlessness that makes a good comic stand out as a memorable act. At \$8 it's hard not to give these guys a go, and with each performer on stage for around 10 minutes, they all provided at least some good laughs and none wore out their welcome.

Alex Murray



2 for 1 Live at the Comics Lounge

Thank goodness these comedians were at least good enough to draw our attention away from the glittering curtains and lights that are the Comic's Lounge. They shared with us material and personalities that would have made any venue feel comfortable and bright. In short, they were quite exceptional. MC John Burgos gently dictated the comic mood of the evening, with his smooth delivery and unapologetically rapid pace. This was crucial, considering the length of the show; kind of like a comedy value meal deal, and definitely worth the upgrade.

The first thing that struck me about Gabriel Rossi's *Gift of the Gab* was his refreshing approach to suburban humour. We've heard the Frankston jokes a thousand times, but Rossi managed to balance these laughs with a more universal comic through line, which, given the nature of the festival, was much appreciated. He relied unashamedly on cultural stereotypes (including his own) that, though tiring at times, still managed to stay unpredictable enough to catch the audience off guard.

I was initially hesitant about the order in which the show's two comedians appeared, but as the audience became progressively intoxicated, the mood shift brought about by Chris Bennett's work proved perfectly timed. Appropriately coined *Straight Up*, Bennett, in a word, had nothing. But for someone with nothing, his insulting, offensive, and ultimately charming banter smacked of intelligence and wit. All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable night of comedy. But a word of warning: make sure you're not relying on the last train home.

Laura Maitland



Aaron Keeffe and the Artist Formerly Known as Harry

Have you ever been mistaken for somebody famous? Or perhaps someone thought that you were somebody you're not. It's annoying isn't it? Now, imagine that person is a 12-year-old wizard from a children orientated movie. That's going to annoy you more than somewhat. Well, that is exactly what Aaron Keeffe has had to put up with since the release of the first Harry Potter movie, with exponential growth in recognition with each additional movie. This notoriety is something he has attempted to cash in on, just like any other person alive would have done.

Aaron Keeffe and the Artist Formerly Known as Harry is Keeffe's attempt to reclaim himself from the common misconception that his is, in fact, a fictitious student at a place that does not exist. Throughout his performance, Keeffe opens up to his audience, inviting them deep into his own personal life and that of his closest friends. Something that will surely get him into trouble one of these days.

Keeffe recently took part in the massive attempt to break the record for the world's longest running comedy gig. He admits to staying up for roughly three days straight, which shows his dedication to his art and his lack of all common sense.

Appearing at the elegant Elephant and Wheelbarrow on Bourke Street, Keeffe's enthusiasm and energy draws you into his performance in ways that have to be experienced. An utterly enjoyable and highly entertaining evening.

Just don't call him Harry.

Ewan Gordon



The Adventures of Captain Frodo - Tales of a Modern Day Showman

Captain Frodo blends his particular style of sideshow entertainment with the story of his life in his one-man show, *The Adventures of Captain Frodo*. Born the son of a Norwegian magician, Captain Frodo expounds upon tales of his childhood, the things that fascinated him and that led him to become The Incredible Rubber Man. He entertains with a mix of sideshow, musical saw-playing and magic, but what really makes him special is his expertise in double-jointed dislocation. You'll wince and applaud as he twists and contorts, and thanks to his comic timing and showmanship, you'll be unable to tear your eyes away.

Captain Frodo's story offers a look not only into the early life of this wonderful entertainer but also into the art of the travelling sideshow itself, which is rapidly becoming smaller in today's world. Frodo may appear to occasionally fumble, but his stage presence is captivating. The slapstick comedy pervades and everything is done with a flourish. There is a point when Frodo tells a story from his youth that inspired him and, as he tells of the characters ascending into the air to safety, the feeling of this performer's delight in what he does is palpable and touches everyone in the audience. This is as much a reflection on his life as a complete one-man show. As he says, though, 'It may be sideshow, but I like it.'

Richard Ibrahim



An Unfortunate Woman

If you are tired of slick one-liners, political satire and jokes about bad sex then spend this Comedy Festival at La Mama and, in particular, spend some time with Nicola Gunn in *An Unfortunate Woman*. An extraordinary and poignant physical performance will be your reward. This is a solo show with a cast of many characters including a lively childlike clerk, a boring and boorish psychiatrist, and an American nymphomaniac. Although a little confusing at the beginning, it

is well worth the wait when in the end all the threads come together. Besides, any confusion is outweighed by the joy of watching the various scenes and tableaux being set out before us.

The show manages to combine Gunn's considerable physical and mime skills, facial expressions and vocal work with charming music and lighting (deftly executed by Gwendolyna Holmberg Gilchrist and Brydie Smith). It was on occasion a little quaint for my liking, and a bit more facial openness from Gunn towards the audience would have been welcome, as I wanted to connect with the performer more. Plus, a minor criticism and a personal idiosyncrasy of mine: please, Ms Gunn, come back for a bow. Gunn is a strong performer who delivers a humorous and often haunting portrayal of people trying to escape the reality of their lives in vastly different ways and with varying degrees of success. A very welcome piece of theatre outside of the usual fare.

Irene Korsten

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Andrew McClellands
Mixed Tape

Going to see Andrew McClelland doing a show about music is a joy. Anyone who has seen him DJ around Melbourne will know his passion for good music (and a good dance) is perfect fodder for a Melbourne International Comedy Festival show.

As McClelland counts down his 10 choices for a perfect mixed tape, the audience taps, claps and laughs along. Moving beyond 'How good is this song!', the show is a DIY mixed tape instruction, teaching us how to make the perfect mixed tape for that special someone.

McClelland lights up a stage from the moment he dances onto it. He is able to chat away to his audience, spreading his own natural exuberance and passion for music and drawing the audience in. From metal to hip hop, indy to pop McClelland is able to use music as a bridge to relate to the audience. Much like his regular stand-up, there is no unnecessary profanity, no bagging out others to raise himself, just a genuine delight for what amuses and entertains the performer, and it seems the audience too.

Having entertained us previously with pirates and secret societies, it's fantastic to watch McClelland share with us a topic so close to his own heart. Whether it's the joyful music he selects to play for us or his own likeable personality, this show has an energetic, playful air.

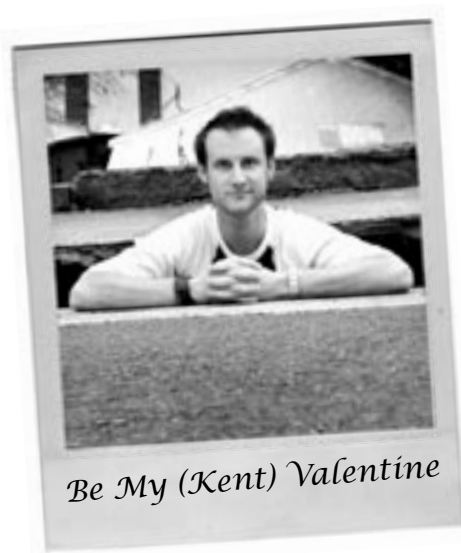


Ang Fang live with Charlie
Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*

Charlie Chaplin is the poor man's Buster Keaton. His comic stylings are annoying, his antics boring and the vast array of his films take up valuable space on cinematic shelves worldwide. That said, *The Ang Fang Quartet presents Charlie Chaplin's 'Gold Rush'* has turned me around to the idea of watching his films, if only with live accompaniment.

Old silent films were originally made to be performed with live orchestras, or in the case of remote towns, an old man on a broken piano. That groups like The Ang Fang Quartet are still out there continuing this tradition is a wonderful thing to behold. They weave modern classics into the narrative of Chaplin's movie, including 'Riders on the storm' at the outbreak of a nasty storm, and their polka version of 'Stayin' Alive' had me giggling uncontrollably.

Complete with cartoon sound effects such as duck calls and drum rolls, this is a highly entertaining alternative to the usual stand-up. If you're up for something different, and dread 'audience participation', then sit back and take in a movie with a difference.



Be My (Kent) Valentine

Kent Valentine's set is essentially an autobiographical narrative about his love life. It's a clever format that means that even when a joke fails, the audience's interest is kept alive by the story itself. Valentine swaps poses every now and again, from loud and tightly wound joker to confidential storyteller on bent knees.

There are a handful of guffaws in the set, my personal favourite being a depiction of the 'Interventionist God' working away at his world computer (with a cameo by Allah). In fact, while Valentine does not alter his voice greatly, his impressions of people are a highlight of the act.

However, he is a newbie to the circuit and it shows in his limited ability to interact with the intimate audience. He does pass a bag of jelly beans round to begin the show, but later, when he ad libs during the set or addresses members of the audience, the flow is interrupted. Occasionally he will notice a joke that has failed and send it off with a muttered epitaph: 'I took a chance, and it didn't work. Moving on...' These small lapses in self-assurance diminish his otherwise confident tone.

While the set has its lesser moments and lulls in the laughter, Valentine engages his audience and appears at ease before them. And, most importantly, he displays several flashes of comedy gold, which indicate that young Kent Valentine could be looking at a successful comic career.



Ben Chisholm in
'Don't Tell Mum'

Do you have one of those annoying friends whose attempts to impersonate a famous comedian or superstar fail? Then I highly recommend taking that friend to see *Ben Chisholm in Don't Tell Mum!* Chisholm is one of the finest impressionists around today, taking the piss out of some of Hollywood's biggest celebrities and more than a few of our home-grown heroes as well. In one show you can see him mimic the comedy stylings of people like Eddie Murphy, Chris Rock, and Dave Hughes alongside musical pieces by performers such as Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra.

Chisholm cleverly intertwines the celebrities we love (and loathe) into situations that they would never find themselves in, to hilarious effect. Thanks to this fact, *Don't Tell Mum* is a gut-busting, knee-slapping experience that will have you tapping your toes and holding your sides. With audience interaction welcome through the show, this is definitely a show for those who like to join in the action.

Playing at the stately Elephant and Wheelbarrow on Bourke Street, Chisholm's show is an experience no fan of impressions should miss. Not the usual show you would expect to see at this year's Comedy Festival, but definitely worth a look.



Birdmannifesto
Night of the Birdmann

Nestled within the Comedy @ Trades program guide is a small, short and anonymous quotation from *The Age* reviewing The Birdmann's previous exploits. It reads, quite simply, '...he is funny.' Reading this, and not knowing much else of the elusive birdlike figure, I was, I admit, apprehensive. What was a show that engendered such a bland and unimaginative statement going to be like?

I'm a nervous spectator. I worry about the quality of what I'm going to see, for myself, for my fellow audience members and, just to be fair, for the performers themselves. So, when Birdmann's awkward, slightly gawky figure entered into the intimate atmosphere of the small Old Council Chambers, clearly twirping (my own little bird pun for The Pun) with nervous energy, I was filled with teetering misgiving.

HOWEVER (And that's a big however.), Birdmann's self-deprecating and pastiche cabaret show proceeded to wipe my nervousness away with relieved giggles. Aware of the strangeness of his appearance and of a cabaret star's role, which is to speak to a largely unresponsive audience, Birdmann plays with the absurd, mocking comic and cabaret conventions whilst also using such conventions to frame his show.

Somewhat like a B-grade movie, *Birdmannifesto* irreverently amuses itself by using the tricks of the trade as a basis for its own humour. If you love the absurd, enjoy revelling in the silly and don't mind cosy, intimate audience settings, then you will have to concur—Birdmann is funny.



Charlie Pickering
Auto

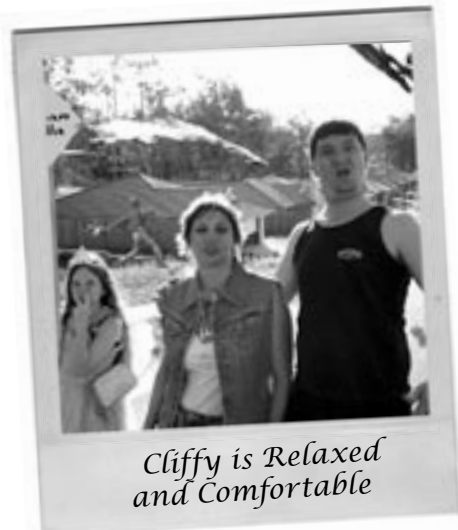
Reading the biography of B.B. King, Charlie Pickering decides that if B.B. can write so badly and still get published then damn it all, so can he. What follows are Pickering's attempts to begin his own autobiography.

Auto is a show where the crafty touch of the director is obvious. Pickering, a generally bouncy, physical and energetic performer, spends much of the performance seated and even when moving shows control and purpose. The stage, complete with desk and computer, sets the performance up as a piece of theatrical comedy, rather than traditional stand-up. Director Alan Brough, a deft hand at shaping comedy performances to make the most of the material, has helped Pickering create a refined, well-thought-out narrative.

The strength of *Auto* lies in its departure from a quick-laugh stand-up set and into an overarching story which is woven together tightly. There are plenty of laughs, but the audience also enjoys following Pickering's recollections of past memories and characters, seeing him make fun of himself and all the people he has been surrounded by.

There is no doubt that the performer has attempted something different from his last show, *Betterman*, and comes out with something more dramatic, possibly sacrificing some laughs along the way. A solid performance which has been polished to perfection is presented in a way that allows the audience to come along on a journey rather than dip in and out of stand-up material, a nice change from many of the 'straight' shows of the Festival.





*Cliffy is Relaxed
and Comfortable*

Navigating the back alleys of Melbourne, passing malodorous dumpsters, scurrying rodents, graffiti and poster encrusted brick walls, one wonders what awaits in the bowels of the Duckboard. There awaits Cliffy, Relaxed and Comfortable, nay, almost comatose, in his backyard bungalow in the leafy but riot-ridden suburb of Bogan Villa.

The set is simple, clever and functional. Cliffy's entrance is imaginative and throughout the performance the multimedia aspects propel the storyline: involving several other characters, whilst confining the onstage cast to two. The characters are clichéd but effective, if at times overstated (There's a limit to how much fart humour a man can stomach.). Cliffy's missus, Love, is similarly trite but is she merely there to facilitate character changes for Cliffy? She needs more thematic individuality and a more nagging performance to provide contrast to Cliffy's phlegmatic disposition.

This is not stand-up (thank God): it is almost a mini musical. The writing is satirical, humorous and a sardonic comment on the state of life in the 'burbs. The melodies are catchy and the lyrics clever, but the use of mics in such a small space is unnecessary and distracts from the natural intimacy of the setting. I would not be surprised if in the near future it is revealed that Cliffy is the lost love child of Norman Gunston and Dame Edna. In the mean time, while the show is not a riot, it is an insightful and entertaining glance into the backyard bungalows of the Australian mind.

Alexander McKenzie



*Corrine Grant
Faking It*

To me, there is nothing wrong with a show that unremittingly elicits a smile without having the audience rolling around screaming, 'Stop, stop, I've wet myself!' Corinne Grant's *Faking It*, a collection of memories and anecdotes ranging from her childhood to her time at *Rove Live*, does exactly this. Its warm, gentle humour rarely fades and, in many ways, her ability to maintain a constant level of grin-worthy material puts her ahead of the multitude of

acts that may have you guffawing one minute and wondering whether you can ask for your money back the next.

Grant admitted that *Faking It* was her first stand-up show at the Festival in five years; a remarkable fact given the ease of her delivery. She has found a comedy niche that seems to suit her ideally—the personable, young auntie-figure who can tell an amusing yarn without ever crossing into nasty or embarrassing territory—and carried it out with an effortless professionalism. On the Wednesday night that I saw her, she admitted to having a cold. While other comics might have let it get in the way, Grant quipped about the whiskey she was hiding behind the lectern, took a sip halfway through the show when she was 'getting snotty' and continued on as if in good health.

Her repartee with the audience is natural and fun and, while she doesn't have the brilliant timing of some of her peers, she makes up for it by creating a buoyant, comfortable atmosphere.

Jonathon Rivett

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*Courteney Hocking's
Foolish Ideas and Crackpot
Inventions Show*

Courteney Hocking brings her first full solo show to the Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 2006. Hocking starts the show by explaining she isn't an inventor, but rather by process of meeting an attractive boy who was an inventor she became interested in the more...well...unusual things which have been invented throughout the years. As she started looking at the things around us that have been invented (but not necessarily reached house hold name status) Hocking slowly became more and more fascinated, and in this show runs through her favourite madcap inventions.

More than just a collection of other people's wacky ideas, Hocking creates a show which manages to be funny, touching and personal. Despite a faulty projector on the night that I saw her, Hocking took the problems in her stride and didn't allow the resulting difficulties with timing and structure to stop her connecting with the audience. The stories she shared about her research of inventions large and small drew in the crowd and allowed her to show off her ability to find humor in diverse topics.

With a well-rounded, entertaining show, Hocking is one of those performers who leave you feeling like you've had more than a quick laugh. She has a genuine warmth on stage, coupled with original material, which displays her ability to craft a show from a good premise and carry it off. Plenty of laughs and a good tale combine to make a great show from a talented up-and-coming comic.

Lefa Singleton



*Dave Hughes
Hughesy Rides Again*

Everybody loves Hughesy. Even Hughesy. Thankfully, he balances this with the healthy dose of good old-fashioned self-deprecation bordering on self-loathing that we've all grown to know and love. And if that ain't Aussie, then I'll eat my corkscrew hat. *Hughesy Rides Again* is Hughesy at his borderline defamatory best—managing to walk the fine line between edgy and offensive thanks to a masterful ability to apologise (turning the hand-over-giggling-face manoeuvre into an art form).

With his trademark throwaway phrases thrown in to the mix (Surely, in the Dave Hughes guide to comedy would be written 'If you need a laugh and need it quick, throw in a 'good on me', a 'whatever', or even a quick combo of both.), Hughesy manages to cover some diverse ground. Combining political with the personal, Dave Hughes has succeeded in making his bogan persona last, despite his great professional success which takes him out of that very demographic.

But the shtick still works. In fact, this is Hughesy at his bogany best. He doesn't pretend that he's not successful. Au contraire, he freely admits loving it when people recognise him, getting annoyed with British backpackers who don't, and trying to field criticism from fellow celebrities unhappy with being the butt of his jokes. He just tells it the way it is, with his spot on delivery ensuring he'll continue to be as Aussie-embraced as Vegemite for a very long time to come. Good on him.

Jenny Wynter



The Dead Set

To be a lone performer on a blackened stage without props takes courage, and that's what the three members of *The Dead Set* deliver alongside their comedy. Nothing is sacred—from Pakistanis to postmodern relationships, sign language to Bjork, and recorder poetry to emo music—these three deliver laugh after laugh.

MC Andrew Horabin fills the stage with his hilarious songs that will appeal to anyone with either a slight left leaning or self-love issues. It took me about half of her performance to warm to Claire Hooper, but when I got there I nearly fell of my seat with laughter. And Xavier Michelides—well what can I say. Thank God Perth has released this comic genius for Melbourne's laughing pleasure. What an incredible talent he is for being able to put on and cast aside a multitude of riotous characters. And I do love a comic who can laugh at his own jokes on stage.

The show is well-paced, with Horabin's musical escapades providing the perfect buffer between the styles of Hooper and Michelides. It is only an hour show, so there is no looping back on old jokes for narrative drive. But it's not needed because the show powers along like a bumpy yet thrilling train ride, with no clear segues between jokes, but plenty of energy and raw talent.

Check out *The Dead Set* before Michelides becomes so famous you won't be able to afford to.

Kelly Blainey

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SHOW NAME	VENUES	TIME	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU	
\$6.99 kg	The Amber Lounge	7:00pm	12	13	14			17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
\$6.99 kg	The Amber Lounge	9:00pm					*							*						*									
* 160 Characters	Umbrella Revolution	7:00pm																										*	
The 17th Annual Great Debate	Melbourne Town Hall	5:00pm																										*	
2 for 1 Live @ The Comic's Lounge	Comic's Lounge	8:30pm	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2006 Vena Und Schnitzel's World Calypso	The Croft Institute	8:00pm	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
The 20th Brian McCarthy Moosehead Benefit	Melbourne Town Hall	8:00pm																										*	
The 4 Noels: A Night at Fat Willy's	Melbourne Town Hall	8:15pm						*							*						*								
* The 4 Noels: The N.A.F.F Film Festival	Trades Hall	7:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* A Porthole into the Minds of the Vanquished	Melbourne Town Hall	7:15pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A Son Of Your Own	Trades Hall	10:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Aaron Keefe & Artist Formerly Known as Harry	Elephant & W'Barrow	7:15pm						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Aaron Keefe & Artist Formerly Known as Harry	Elephant & W'Barrow	9:30pm							*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Adam Hills: Characterful	Melbourne Town Hall	7:15pm			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Adam McKenzie	Victoria Hotel	7:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Adam Simmons Toy Band	Footscray Arts Centre	2:00pm																		*									
Adam Vincent	Duckboard House	8:45pm																		*								*	
Adam Vincent	Duckboard House	10:45pm														*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* The Adventures of Captain Frodo	Trades Hall	8:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
The After Party	Exford Hotel	11:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Akmal Saleh: Akmal	Victoria Hotel	9:45pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Akmal Saleh: Akmal	Melbourne Town Hall	9:45pm						*						*						*			*					*	
* Am Dilemma	Trades Hall	9:15pm						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* The Amazing Johnathan	The Palms at Crown	9:30pm														*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
An Unfortunate Woman	La Mama	6:30pm							*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
An Unfortunate Woman	La Mama	8:30pm								*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Andrew McClelland's Mix Tape	Duckboard House	9:45pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Andy Muirhead is.....Perky?	Melbourne Town Hall	8:15pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
The Ang Fang Quartet LIVE	Trades Hall	4:00pm					*							*						*			*					*	
Anthony Menchetti in Ants Pantz!	Butterfly Club	9:00pm												*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Anthony Morgan	Victoria Hotel	9:45pm												*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Arj Barker: Unmitigated	RMIT Capitol Theatre	9:00pm												*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Arj Barker: Unmitigated	RMIT Capitol Theatre	10:00pm				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Arj Barker: Unmitigated	RMIT Capitol Theatre	10:45pm	*											*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
* Austen Tayshus Live 2006	Trades Hall	8:45pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Barb Joseph: So I Married an Arab	Elephant & W'Barrow	7:30pm	*					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Barb Joseph: So I Married an Arab	Elephant & W'Barrow	9:00pm							*					*					*			*		*	*	*	*	*	*
* Be My (Kent) Valentine	Portland Hotel	9:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
The Beautiful Losers	Trades Hall	10:45pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ben Chisholm in Don't Tell Mum!	Elephant & W'Barrow	6:15pm											*	*														*	
Ben Chisholm in Don't Tell Mum!	Elephant & W'Barrow	7:15pm	*			*	*	*					*	*														*	
Ben Chisholm in Don't Tell Mum!	Elephant & W'Barrow	9:30pm						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Ben Payne in Duopoly of One	Trades Hall	7:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Ben Price: Hollywood Live and Uncut	The Palms at Crown	9:30pm											*	*	*	*				*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Best of the Edinburgh Fest	RMIT Capitol Theatre	7:30pm												*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Best of the Edinburgh Fest	RMIT Capitol Theatre	8:30pm				*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Best of the Edinburgh Fest	RMIT Capitol Theatre	9:30pm	*											*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Big Laugh Out @ Federation Square FREE	Federation Square	2:00pm				*	*	*					*	*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Big Laugh Out @ Federation Square FREE	Federation Square	5:30pm			*								*							*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Big Laugh Out FREE	C'wood Child Farm	11:00am											*							*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Big Laugh Out FREE	C'wood Child Farm	1:00pm											*							*			*		*	*	*	*	*
* Birdmannifesto: A Night of the Birdmann	Trades Hall	9:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Bombay to Beijing by Bicycle	45 Downstairs	7:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Bombay to Beijing by Bicycle	45 Downstairs	10:15pm												*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Bruno Lucia Stand Up And Rock	The Leveson	8:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Burlesque Idol	Trades Hall	9:45pm				*							*	*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
* Call Girls	Melbourne Town Hall	6:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Celebrity Theatresports	National Theatre	7:30pm												*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
* Charlie Pickering: Auto	Victoria Hotel	9:45pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Christina Adams: Alive in Madagascar	Melbourne Town Hall	7:15pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Christina Davis: Secret Diaries	Melbourne Town Hall	10:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
* Claire Hooper: Oh	Trades Hall	7:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Class Clowns National Grand Final	Melbourne Town Hall	1:00pm												*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
* Cluffy is Relaxed and Comfortable	Duckboard House	8:15pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
COM ED OKE!	Exford Hotel	8:30pm						*						*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
COM ED OKE's 48 Hour World Record Attempt	Exford Hotel	11:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Come With Me	Elephant & W'Barrow	6:15pm																										*	*
Come With Me	Elephant & W'Barrow	9:30pm																										*	*
Comedy Appreciation? (Don't) Make Me Laugh	Duckboard House	6:00pm						*						*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Comedy Channel Short Film Festival FREE	RMIT Capitol Theatre	7:00pm						*						*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Comedy Channel Short Film Festival FREE	6 Links	7:00pm							*					*						*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Comedy Chann Short Film Fest Awards FREE	BMW Edge	7:30pm												*				*		*			*		*	*	*	*	*
Comedy Channel Short Film Festival FREE	Federation Square	8:00pm											*							*			*		*	*	*	*	*



* Indicates performances on Sunday commencing one hour earlier than listed

* Indicates performances on Sunday commencing one hour earlier than listed



*Deliberations of
a Disco Diva*

Flaire, self-proclaimed queen of the scene, is a stalwart of Melbourne's nightclubs; a thirty-eight year old rager who's finding it progressively harder to get ready for a big night out. Surely, after 21 years on the town, you're going to be a little exhausted, No? That may be the case for most, but Flaire is determined to go out spectacularly. Armed with a sassy attitude, she's going to have a night to remember—and she's going to show her younger, prettier nemesis Eve how it's done.

Renee Palmer stars in *Deliberations of a Disco Diva*, a one-woman extravaganza with disco balls, musical interludes, feather boas, and two fabulous male sidekicks. For the most part, it's a comedy tackling everything from sex, drugs, mothers at Northland and bouncers. There are also the inevitable moments of realisation—that, perhaps, the relentless clubbing at 38 is tragic; that she probably should have followed her true love; and that she can't possibly compete with Eve, with her fabulous legs, blonde hair and youth. They are epiphanies that could come off as sounding rather naff, and sometimes the contemplative silence is a bit melodramatic, but Palmer ensures that Flaire never takes herself too seriously. You'll laugh and cringe, but all credit to Palmer who makes Flaire so endearing.

If you were ever a disco diva or a lady of the nightlife, put on your dancing shoes and relive the memories of yesteryear with *Deliberations of a Disco Diva*.

Gillian Terzis



Disney on Dry Ice

Disney on Dry Ice is a cartoonish slapstick mafia spoof that doesn't hit its mark. A few shows have been running long at this year's Comedy Festival, but this show is just too long. And that is its major flaw: the script. It needs a lot of work. Some of the set ups to jokes are so long the audience are at the punchline before the performers, and other running jokes outstay their short welcome.

The show is based on a very good central idea, taking a hostage that isn't alive, in this case, Walt Disney, so there is less chance of an escape. Disorganised mobsters, police snipers and a cult for the disabled all become involved in the plot to ransom the cryogenic frozen head of the beloved cartoonist.

At about half an hour in, the show loses all direction. The plot becomes nonsense and the quality of the jokes deteriorates. That being said, the performances were a highlight, especially Teri Brabon as Wilma, the ditzy New York gangster's mole. The entire cast are enthusiastic and work very hard to get the maximum laughs out of the material they are working with. Staging and lighting design were also of a high standard; the digitally projected backgrounds were very effective. But it is a show that has lost its way. The script needs to be cut down and worked on some for it to become a winner.

Travers Purton



The Gala (on TV)

It occurred to us here at *The Pun* that the majority of our readers would have been lucky to obtain tickets to the sold out *Gala* show at the start of this festival. So here I am, reviewing *The Gala* in its most commonly seen format, as presented by the good people at Network Ten a week and a half later.

Since this is the Festival's 20th birthday, *The Gala* was a huge event with over 20 comedians, all of whom were at least mildly amusing during their five minute sets (with the exception of Dave Hughes, who was an arse as usual). Adam Hills did a great job of hosting the show, and made a nice change from Wil Anderson, who was VERY SHOUTY. The Umbilical Brothers, who normally leave me cold, had me in stitches with their Velcro World piece. Dylan Moran and Stephen K Amos were great in their scathing attacks on our country. Lano & Woodley danced around in sleeping bags, which is something our Sub-Editorial Manager, Jane, likes to do, and Splymonkey delighted everyone by putting Real Live Penises on stage.

Even the ads were funny. Kostya Tsyu is now the face of a life insurance company. McDonald's customers get chased by giant lettuces. And Clairol are marketing a product called Root Touch-Up.

It's not all good though—where was Rod Quantock? The only comedian who's performed at every single festival over the last 20 years—he should have had a starring role. And been given some sort of award, with a generous cash prize. Shame on the Festival for this glaring oversight.

Chloe Walker



*Glenn Wool
Where Is Hell?*

The Powder Room in the Melbourne Town Hall is muggy. Its hot and smoky moisture hangs heavy in the air. The stage backdrop is adorned with a black sign with silver letters that simply say 'HELL'. Sweating, I do a quick stocktake of my recent behaviour and begin to worry.

However when Glenn Wool arrives on stage (looking nothing like his poster) I relax. It's just a poorly ventilated room, and a loose theme that ties together a bloody funny hour of comedy.

Where to kick off a show is always difficult. It can take a little while for a Melbourne crowd to warm up and get nice and vocal, although Wool (a Canadian of sorts) was helped by his deft dealing of an early interruption by a mobile phone, a beeping ticket scanner, and a police siren.

Spanning the topics of race, religion, drugs, sexuality, and a Scrabble joke, Wool pulls together a tight, energetic show that asks where hell is and just who exactly might be there. Wickedly droll with a no taboo policy, Wool attacks his targets with well-aimed daggers and no regrets.

Lambasting the audience early on for their own prejudices, (Am I allowed to say I enjoyed the Jewish jokes?) Wool then charms, manipulates, and performs an AC/DC tribute, which left me with sore cheeks and wanting more.

Oh, and if you want the full Glenn Wool experience, make sure you sit up the front.

Alex Murray



*Goddess Wanted: Must
Provide Own Pedestal*

I was mentally prepared to cut *Goddess Wanted: Must Provide Own Pedestal* a break. There's always a moment in an out of the way show that gives them a fair review, a genuinely funny moment that you can use to salvage something from a show you can muster no enthusiasm for. But when you're begging for the end and they give you an interval, you lose whatever hope you had.

What.
Ever.

Then they made it worse. See, there's a rule in the theatre game (and this is theatre, folks. Props, lighting and scene changes. Theatre.) Actors don't come out for a quick pint with the audience until after the show. It's Just Not Done. In a show this genuinely terrible, you'd expect the crew to be commiserating over a couple of heavies during the God-awful 15 minutes of waiting, but the actors stay in the space 'til it's done. It's called professionalism, people.

I feel better now.

Let's talk about the triumph of mediocrity. *Goddess Wanted* has its heart in exactly the right place. One of the great things about comedy, and the Festival, is the place it gives women to speak in their own voices about themselves, and about the world in which they live—things like body fascism, and the pressure work and home and family exert even when they're not what you have chosen. I suspect the loosely connected vignettes of *Goddess Wanted* may have referred to those.

Chris Wenn



Hard to Swallow

When Miss Behave first appears on stage, her voice is sharp as a whip crack as she races around frantically, bellowing: 'Who's got my wine?' She is an eccentric with a sense of humour as upfront as her generous cleavage. A dark horse and a diva, she's at once all attitude and sass, but with a certain warmth that invites the audience to become her confidantes.

Rifling through an old suitcase, she ruminates on her years spent touring. Then, like a dazzling card trick, she turns the monologue inside out. Re-emerging in a saucy red pinstriped playsuit, she seduces us into believing that 'reality is an illusion', before performing a spirited burlesque striptease. She is raunchy; she is robust. What unfolds is a comic variety show featuring performance oddities and subject matter spanning from an encounter with Glen Miller on NYE, to rough and ready renditions of clubbing days with tramps and misfits. And that was before she joined a freak show.

A highly developed physical performer and stand-up comedian, Miss Behave brandishes an absurd sense of humour. She balances monologues about doubt and self-love with boisterous anecdotes and outrageous stunts—her sword swallowing act is simply astonishing.

Director Laura Sheedy must be commended for her part in creating a show that oscillates between the grotesque and the intimate without becoming overly self-indulgent. The self-reflexive narrative lures the audience into Miss Behave's private world.

Anna Sutton



*Harley Breen
Son of a Preacher Man*

Harley Breen is the son of a preacher man—no, really, he is! And, similar to his father's choice to take to the pulpit to spread God's word, Harley takes to the stage and spreads his own comical gospel, laying bare his soul on everything from his first experience with masturbation to the day he tried to hang himself—a serious and apparently true story which he still tells with comic ease.

As one can imagine, being raised by a preacher offers a potential minefield of laughs, and for the most part, the audience is taken on a humorous tour of Harley's youth and adolescence. The high energy with which Breen delivers this is engaging and sweat inducing (at least on his behalf!), with the physical playing out of his childhood memories especially amusing.

He lost me a little with a particular sequence towards the end of his routine where he plays 'the preacher he might have been'. Others in the audience seemed to enjoy this, but it somehow jarred with his earlier material. And there is also a sense, at times, that if he dug a little deeper into his litany of childhood memories, even funnier material might be exposed.

This show shapes up well for the most and it is highly conceivable that Breen will build himself quite a cult following on the comedy circuit.



Hip Hop 4 Dummeez

Descending into the bowels of the Victoria Hotel where Canadian hip hoppers the Grafenberg All-Stars wait to thrill us with their educational stylings, it strikes me that this isn't really an audience of dummies. They're young and dressed 'street'. A hoodie here, a hoochie there... Just as well, really, because you might need more than a cursory understanding of hip hop to get the most from this engaging and verbally sophisticated show.

Bushman (Kevin Gillese) and Vowel Movement (Eli Batalion) are the Pinky and the Brain of hip hop. Bushman is the brash, hyperactive playa (and, as it turns out, a talented freestyle rapper), while Vowel Movement is the endearingly grave nerd with a gift for absurdist wordplay. They've been honing this lecture-style show since its 2004 debut at Montreal's Just For Laughs Festival, and it's pretty tight.

We run energetically through 'lessons' in everything from hip hop vocab, regional styles and stage presence to the importance of 'keeping it real'. Audience participation ranges from warm-up exercises (for me, an exercise in embarrassment) to bringing a middle-aged lawyer up on stage to declare she's 'in da house!' The slick PowerPoint presentation displays wonderful comic timing (and the telltale fingerprints of Google Image Search!), and the two performers' repartee is polished yet still seems spontaneous. But there are a few disappointments. Bushman's extended skit on spoken word poetry quickly got boring despite his fetching shirtlessness, and the saccharine ending jars with the rest of the show, despite some impressive vocal gymnastics in the final song.

Pauly B



*Hot New Comic's
Showcase*

The *Hot New Comics Showcase*, hey? Maybe we need to get a different cabinetmaker, because this one did a pretty awful job.

The night wasn't a total loss though, as the question of the differences between men and women was answered thoroughly by each performer in turn. I now, at last, know that the differences are: what the sexes wear, how they drive, and their differing views on the sexual act.

Of all the comics who stepped up (there were more than 10 during the night, with five minutes each), young Gareth Moloney got the most few laughs. Jenny Wynter got a clap at the end and a bit of a cheer for at least being confident, if not outwardly humorous.

Watching professional comedians might help this group to understand structure and timing a little better, and perhaps help them to develop a sense of what is appropriate to term as 'comedy'. Otherwise, perhaps they could give it a rest—particularly the fellow who decided to retell forwarded email jokes as his act. It was not that most of the performers were predominantly sexist, racist or unimaginative; it was the fact that it was all so profoundly uninteresting and dull. If just one of them had perhaps decided to do more than tell jokes about how a section of the audience were British (end of punchline) then I would have been impressed.

If basic humour is what you're after, often without clear reason or any nuance, then this show is for you.

Andrew Garrick



*I Know What You
Did Last Monday*

Housed on the dance floor of Altitude, *I Know What You Did Last Monday* is perhaps best described as the opposite of the glitzy well polished Gala. It's an incredibly relaxed atmosphere (Two audience members took to lying down during the performances.) with padded couches, plastic chairs (making for a disorderly yet intimate seating arrangement), and dim red lighting.

The show provides exposure for lesser-known comedians, so that they can build their audience. And for the audience, in return, it provides previews of shows that they may otherwise scan past while reading the festival guide.

The performers on the night of my attendance ran the gamut, from a jittery Raw Comedy finalist through to the polished work of the shoeless and microphone-less Michael Chamberlin. There's an opportunity to listen to a free flowing comedy performance rife with audience interaction like that of the impressive Daniel Townes or the theatrical comedy of Fran and Roxanne. From the hyperactive energy of Justin Kennedy to the laid-back droll of Aaron Keeffe, or even for the chance to uncover new international talent like Dan Willis and Nik Coppin, this is a perfect event for the indecisive comedy festival-goer.

I Know What You Did Last Monday is the ultimate comedy festival experience for those who crave variety in their comedy styles and performances, or those who are looking for a preview of some of the not so publicised shows available this year.

Jade Gulliver



Insert Name Here

Insert Name Here

Insert Name Here is a celebration of all that is good and right about low budget, amateur film-making: bad taste, bad acting and bad special effects. The show is hosted by Jaymie Wilson who, in addition to selecting the films, has two of his own in the collection. In his opening gambit, he draws parallels between the early works of film-makers like Peter Jackson and the work in the collection, and makes a point of emphasising the budgetary constraints faced by emerging film-makers. However, it's the creativity that this lack of money necessitates that makes these films memorable.

Featured short films came from Australia, New Zealand, the USA and the French provinces of Canada, suggesting that Wilson must have some solid international contacts or that there is some kind of international association of amateur B-Grade film-makers. Some of the films were in jaw-droppingly poor taste (Oh God, the clowns.), but these were mercifully overwhelmed by the genuinely funny moments. Kung Fu Kitties, with its retro video game aesthetic and kung fu movie clichés, stands out in my mind as the highlight of the evening.

Insert Name Here is testimony to the creativeness and imagination of the featured filmmakers. If the gratuitous use of offal is your thing, this collection of B-Grade short film is bound to amuse.

Sarah Miller



The Jaundice Table

The Jaundice Table is an encounter with comedic theatre where you enter knowing very little about the show and leave knowing just as much. But on the ride home your mind is sparking like an insect zapper at a truck stop as you catch the multitude of images flying around your buzzing mind. You are grateful you went on 'the mind-boggling adventure'.

Thanks to the lunacy of Glyn Roberts' wonderfully ludicrous script and the 'committable' performances of the actors you are reminded that theatre doesn't have to make sense to mean something.

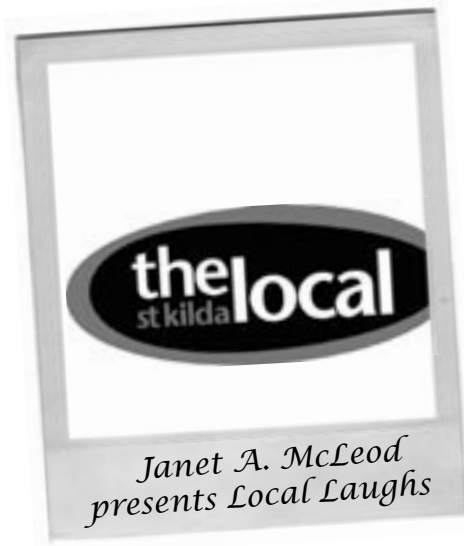
Josh 'paddle hands' Cameron lives up to his name as he balletically gesticulates his way through the show, lips glistening with the afterglow of his verbal insanity, and Jonathon Peck wills you to watch him even in his moments of stillness.

Two blokes, they talk, but—like all blokes who don't practice the art of emotional discourse—what they want to say comes out in riddles, ridiculous observations, rage and raw sexual references. The language is aggressive and poetic, appealing and repulsive. A girl in the front row convulsed frequently with laughter, as did I, in moments of inspiring absurdism.

Peta Hanrahan has been directing independent theatre in Melbourne for 13 years and she allows her actors the freedom they deserve to explore the work. Although at times, I would have liked to see the madness driven a little more honestly.

This is an experience worth having and then reliving for the rest of your life.

Alex Beebe



Janet A. McLeod
presents *Local Laughs*

Neurotic preoccupations about not being gay (but maybe being a bit nerdy) ruled the routines for much of *Local Laughs*. A snaggle (OK call that 10) of local stand-ups cheered the beery hearts and casual chain-smoking suave of the Easter Monday, Balaclava crowd. Perched precariously on a stool cushion with a 60 millimetre circumference at the back of the bar, I passively smoked my way through two cubic tonnes of nicotine and dug the diverse line-up.

There was deliciously indecent carnal wit direct from NSW's Anna Hoffman who had dry delivery, balanced poise and a strangled guitar ditty about looking a bit like a lesbian. Coriander loving Josh Thomas's stage presence was fresh and awkward, self-effacing and charming and contained buzzy material about family 'outings'. Matt Kenneally, looking uncertain, served up sharp, contemporary, political gems—we didn't want him to stop. Ben Payne delivered a cautionary tale about having a vasectomy with gravitas (ahem) and pure timing. There was a biology story from a man comic! Yes! And Jess Moir's routine was all energy and squeaky excitement, some worn gags, but she lobbed us fabulous observations about the Catholic Church and bling. Sam Bowring divided the audience with a villainous sleaze and please routine. Yet there was still gleeful delight left for athletically wordy absurdist the Bedroom Philosopher whose polished performance included a song of wicked nerdery c/o the blogger's diary. All held together with MC Yianni's self-conscious chatty repartee.



Josephine O'Reilly
SHOWJO

Josephine O'Reilly had her audience laughing from the word *SHOWJO*. Infact, they kept laughing for 90 per cent of the show. Unfortunately, this had much to do with the fact that 90 per cent of the preview audience were family members, and little to do with the comic value of her material.

This overly enthusiastic (and often vocal!) response far from fuelled her delivery, but instead saw O'Reilly present an over-anxious and dramatic version of the material she had prepared. What resulted was a preview audience being indulged in a series of personal jokes which left the half dozen of us who were not siblings of the self-confessed catholic comedienne, social worker and opera singer feeling decidedly excluded and removed from the comedy.

Amongst the dramatics though are some genuinely funny moments that will be unanimously appreciated, but it will take a dedicated comedy enthusiast to wade through the material that remains to appreciate them.

SHOWJO is more reminiscent of a humorous toast at a family reunion than a stand-up comedy show that will appeal to Melbourne festival-goers. To O'Reilly's credit though, one gets the impression that she is a performer whose enthusiasm and commitment to her material will not waiver should she come up against a tougher crowd, which she inevitably will in the coming weeks. This is where her professionalism and experience will become apparent.

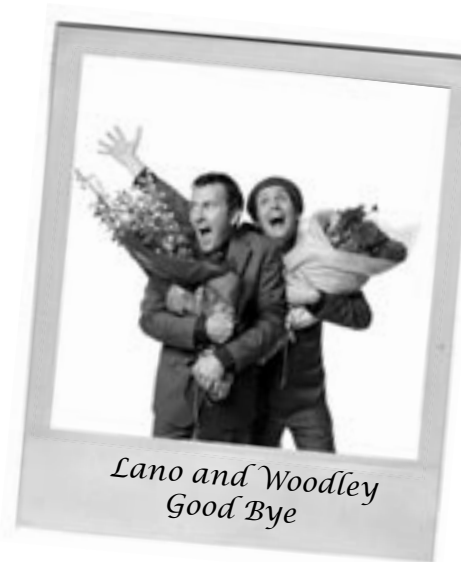


LaLaLuna

LaLaLuna is the story of the night the light went out in the moon, and its caretaker, played by Wolfe Bowart of The Schneedles, had to find a way to defy gravity and replace the bulb. During his quest, though, Bowart (equal parts mime, magician, acrobat and clown) keeps getting distracted—by the washing, a concert performance, and piles and piles of toy rabbits.

This is traditional, old-fashioned clowning. As in, juggling, riding around on a unicycle and sticking your head inside a giant latex bubble kind of traditional. Some people are afraid of clowns (It's called coulrophobia.), but I can assure you that this one is not at all scary. (However for all the pupaphobics in the house, be warned that the show does briefly feature a puppet with glowing, red eyes.) Bowart's antics are alternately enchanting and hilarious as he walks a (figurative) tightrope between theatre and circus. Children and adults alike are drawn into the intensely imaginative world he creates—literally in the case of the one lucky audience member who gets to accompany his ukulele performance with some whoopee cushion percussion.

The American based Bowart got his inspiration for *LaLaLuna* from time spent in Australia's wide open spaces, so it's no wonder that he seems so at ease here in the circus-themed surroundings of Umbrella Revolution at Federation Square. Magical, surreal, absurd and very, very funny, *LaLaLuna* will take you back to a childhood where imagination ruled and the moon was still a mystery.



Lano and Woodley
Good Bye

When Lano & Woodley first announced that this was their last show, it was taken as a joke—the duo are still at the height of their comedic power, so surely the title was a play on the seemingly endless 'farewell' tours so popular with musicians. But it now dawns that this really is it—the boys are calling it quits and they're going out with a bang.

This isn't just a show, it's a phenomenon. Everything about it belies the traditional logic of comedy—they're playing the 18-hundred seater Her Majesty's Theatre, and selling out night after night. They're performing a show that's over two hours long, but which never drags or feels padded. And they're calling it quits when the audience plainly wants them to stay.

The show contains many of their greatest hits from previous shows. The pace never dips, and at one point the audience was having trouble breathing. A video compilation starts the second act, revealing that—quite disturbingly—the boys haven't really changed in 20 years, making their decision to quit more poignant.

It's hard to think of any comedy act that has generated the love that Lano & Woodley do. Many of us grew up with them, so there's almost a familial approach. They're the wacky cousins you only see once a year, but you look forward to their visits.

This is a must see show, do what ever you can to get to it. Because you won't have the chance again.



Late Nite Impro

Late Night Impro happens every Friday and Saturday at 11 pm at the Town Hall. For \$14 (concession and adult), this show is terrific value. It's built around a mock 'Australian Idol' format, except one lucky comedian will get 'the part' in a theatre production—the name and genre decided by the audience on the night.

When I saw it, six actors were vying for a place in 'Sleeping Beauty'—a 'horror musical'. I'd think every other night's topics would be similarly random, as multiple audience suggestions (including character descriptions) are pulled together to create chaotic subject matter.

But it works. The format allows all of the actors to have more than one go at wowing the audience, which is good. The format also means dud characters aren't seen again, and the actor will return with a new (hopefully funnier) attempt at creating comedy.

It's short and sharp, with each 'audition' rarely lasting for more than five minutes. Ultimately, that's a good thing; it keeps the show flowing at a fast pace—although, some of the characters created would be hilarious watching for an hour straight.

And that's the best part; everything you see is improvised. The actors obviously love the freedom this allows and play up accordingly. Some stuff works better than others, but when it's good—it's very good. *Late Night Impro* is a great choice to finish a night of comedy with, before heading out or going home. But get in early—I imagine this one will be popular.



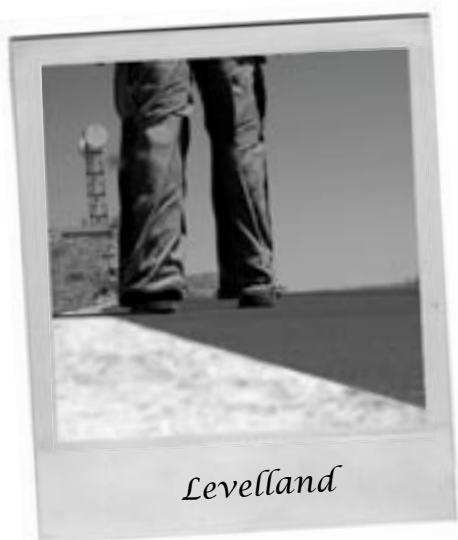
Lawrence Leung: *The Marvellous Misadventures of Puzzle Boy*

Everyone has a Rubik's Cube stashed away somewhere. Or maybe you had one of those cool triangular ones. Could you have been one of the lucky few to own an original Rainbow Master Ball? If so, this show is going to hit you in a tender spot.

Leung is a grown up version of Data from *The Goonies*, complete with cute, geeky clothes and an obsession with gadgets and puzzles. So much so, in fact, that his childhood puzzles form the basic of his Comedy Festival show *Lawrence Leung: The Marvellous Misadventures of Puzzle Boy*.

In an attempt to understand his own recently discovered suitcase full of adolescent love letters, Leung takes his audience back to his childhood days, filled with hours of frustration at solving puzzles, impressing girls and misspelt confessions of adoration. Leung's style feels more like an intimate conversation at a small party; you get the impression he's telling you a personal secret rather than a rehearsed performance, and it makes for a good feeling.

Complete with a truly unbelievable (or possibly extremely deceptive) dexterous finale, Leung entertains in a personal, bubbly and mischievous manner, and you get the feeling that he's just as excited as his audience at regaling the public about his somewhat embarrassing childhood love escapades. Try and be there on the night he finally gets reunited with his long lost first love of 1983.

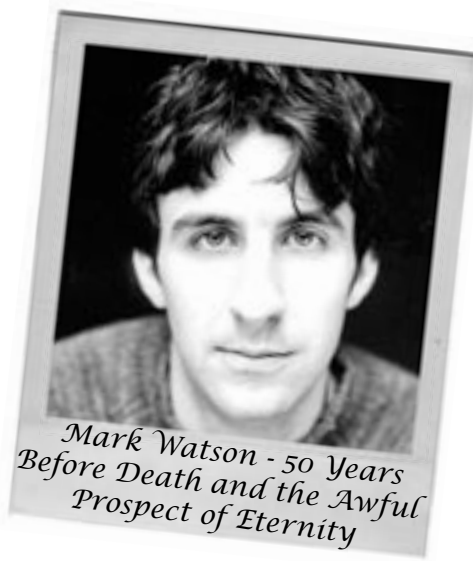


Rich Hall, best known for his caustic stand-up, including his character Otis Lee Crenshaw, has turned his hand to theatre. Set in a West Texas radio station, *Levelland* is an hour or so in the life of talk radio jock Wayman (Hall). He is loud, opinionated and knows he is always right, cutting off or cutting down his callers with relish. The price of gas (petrol) has hit 10 dollars, and a stranger, Scrope (Nathaniel Davis), has come in search of him.

Tackling themes of religion, politics and the oil crisis, *Levelland* could have been heavy going but it is sustained throughout with strong performances—Nathaniel Davis is outstanding as the disturbed Scrope. The show is acerbic, intelligent and well written with some great one-liners. Set at cracking pace, we barely get to meet Hall's character before the action starts to unfold.

Director Guy Masterson has crafted a claustrophobic and conspiratorial atmosphere for the show. It is dark and dramatic, lightened by Hall's wit and ear for dialogue. While the conclusion might not hit the heights the rest of the show has been aiming for, it is still a damn good. Designed to get the audience thinking as well as laughing, *Levelland* succeeds at both. And as far as personal philosophies go, John Cougar Mellencamp's 'You have to stand for something, or you'll fall for anything' isn't too bad. Actually it is. But go to this show—it is sharp, smart and funny.

Travers Purton



A Mark Watson show is kind of like watching a guy on speed with a microphone. Once my senses adjusted to his quick darting lunges, flailing gesticulations and the way his words seem to pour out at a million miles an hour, I came to realise that Watson may be one of the best acts at the Comedy Festival this year.

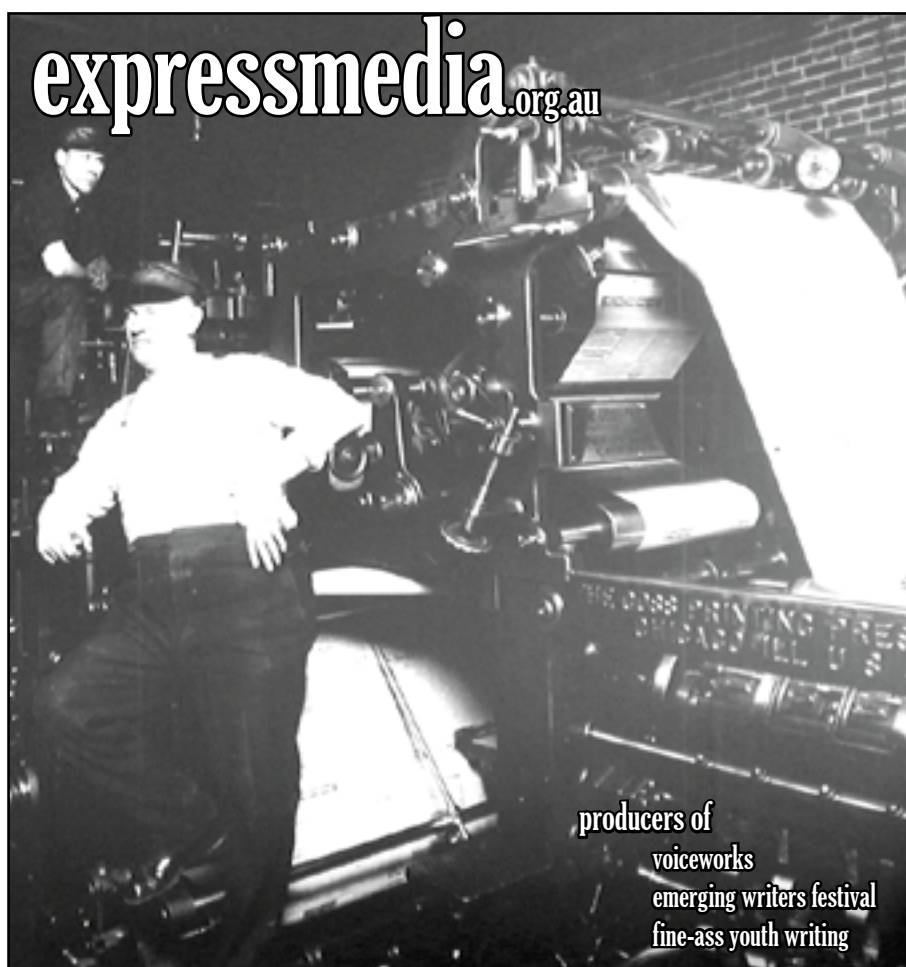
The internet told Watson he has 50 years to live. His show examines the different life stages we must all go

through up until death. Whilst I could see that a pre-scripted show was buried in Watson's mind, I rarely got to see the entire workings of it. The slightest tangent would tempt him to wander away from the task at hand, and it was here that the audience got to see where his true talent lays—improvisation.

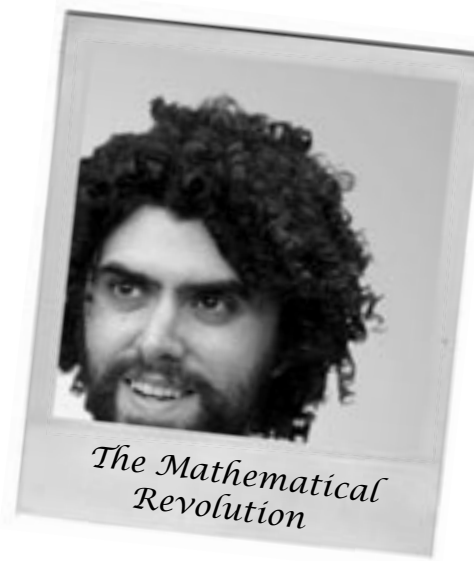
It's one thing to be funny, which Watson certainly is, but it's his self-deprecating charm that seemed to make most of the audience warm to him. He is a comedian who encourages you to laugh at him, not just with him. From poking fun at his inability to do a cockney accent, to engaging the audience in a guessing game as to why two (extremely rude) audience members chose to leave mid-show, he wanted the audience to laugh at the fact that he wasn't perfect.

Something tells me that in a few years time Watson will be one of the big names in comedy. See him now to avoid the crowds.

Sarah Carson



producers of
voiceworks
emerging writers festival
fine-ass youth writing



I don't envy Simon Pampena's position. Here's a guy attempting to do something unnatural on stage: make maths funny. It's novel, it's quirky, but does it succeed? A mathematician by day, a frizzy haired revolutionary by night, Pampena's enthusiasm must be admired. He kick starts the show with a bombastic song and dance, but within seconds the mystery behind the 'How can maths be funny?' question is all but revealed. Pampena's stand-up adheres to a singular joke theory: a daggy affection for arithmetic. And that's where the joke ends. Helped by background diagrams and punctuated with evangelistic cries of 'Maths!', the show lurches eerily close to a mathematics class gone wrong. The trouble is, for such an unusual concept, the humour isn't very original. Many of the jokes rely heavily on stereotypes and in doing so only really scratch the surface of their potential.

The maths itself is a major problem. While a scatter-shot of formula across the screen may make sense to someone of Pampena's mathematical intellect, the average Joe is left staring at hieroglyphics. And by the time the formula and the joke come together, we have no choice but to take Pampena's word for it. That said, Pampena's bold antics definitely rouse a chortle or two. His finale—an aerobic dance-a-thon through the entirety of Einstein's $E=mc^2$ formula—is just plain bizarre.

Unfortunately like algebra classes of old, *The Mathematical Revolution* leaves us a little vague, a little amused, but certainly with a sense of mind-boggling bewilderment.

Joshua Burns



As any 'cheese-ophile' can tell you, camembert cheese especially pleases when it ripens over time and gets creamier. As any lover of cabaret will divulge, cabaret is best enjoyed in a shadowy club at night while huddled around a table, une bouteille d' Barossa Shiraz in hand, with the prospect of dubiously mounted tassels somewhere in the room.

The shirt of *Monsieur Camembert's* consummate flautist, saxophonist and clarinetist, Edouard Bronson, may have had a hint of tassel, but at half past seven, the new Council Chambers room was markedly free of tassels, tables and... well, essential seedy atmosphere. This well-loved, triple ARIA award winning Australian cabaret band, known for their riotous musical spirit, was being watched by an audience sitting politely in rows of seats. Was this really the way to go?

It was hard for the audience to be uninhibited, do freewheeling whirly jigs, sing, and clap each other on the back in an absinthe-sipping state of delirious abandonment. Although to give them their due, Monsieur Camembert tried hard to encourage this. They are a band to accompany naughtiness and late night inebriation. But they were inhibited by a society of sobriety.

They performed as a five-piece, playing an audacious range of gypsy, klezmer, Leonard Cohen, Django Reinhardt, and kitschy Italian (Think Renato Carosone's 'You Want to Play the American'). The wedding party just failed to show up.

Claire O'B



With a cast and crew of trained, accredited and experienced professionals, *Natives Strikin' Blak*, at first, evoked expectations of a highly polished and provocative night's entertainment. But as each comedian took to the stage, it became apparent that, as entertaining as it was, the show was neither polished nor provocative. Unfortunately it ran more like a dress rehearsal. And seeing as though there was both a director and an assistant director working on the production, I found it on the whole to miss out on its potential.

There was a lot of good material, some funny anecdotes, grounded characters and a strong basis for masterful and desperately needed political comment. But all this would have worked better with more rehearsal, rewriting and some slight restructuring. The performers themselves seemed to be at home and talented within their individual characters but were noticeably insecure in their acts. It's a hard task to find yourself alone in front of an audience, and things are a lot different when you're on the other side of the stage, but the crucial part of any stand-up act is to make it look easy. Show no fear and let your character take command. It doesn't really matter what it is you're portraying on stage—if you don't believe it yourself, then the audience won't either.

There was a lot of missed opportunity, but the Ilbjerri Theatre Co-operative gave a promising performance that was worth watching.

Magenta Magenta



Nik Coppin
Spiders, man!



Oh
Claire Hooper



Rachel Berger
Loose Cannon



*A Porthole into the
Minds of the Vanquished*



Ramblings



Richard McKenzie
Digger

Every festival there is an international comedian who seemingly has done absolutely nothing in the way of research about the country he is playing in, and Nik Coppin isn't this year's. Coppin's knowledge of Australian life and Australiana in general is more than that of your average Englander. Meaning: he knows that we don't all ride round in kangaroos or catch wombats to work. Oh, he also knows a little about football, so extra points for that.

Coppin's show *Spiders, Man!* is unlike any other show I have seen to date. His unique blend of English humour combined with his worldly experience make this one show not to missed. The title *Spiders' Man!* comes from Coppin's arachnophobia, which makes you wonder why he has travelled to a land with some of the most dangerous spiders in the world.

Coppin deals with events that have shaped his life in ways that endear him to the heart of each and every audience member. This show is well worth the price of admission merely to see the highly improvisational style of show due to the self-proclaimed lack of preparation. Still...no worries, hey?

Playing at the illustrious Elephant and Wheelbarrow on Bourke Street, Coppin is one Englander who I would be happy call an 'adopted Aussie'. In his third year at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Coppin sets a new benchmark for international comedy. At least, he does for those who hail from England.

Beware the bunny suit.

Be warned: this is not a normal stand-up show. Most notably because Perth based comedian, Claire Hooper, doesn't speak for the entire length of the one hour routine. Now before you start thinking, 'Oh God, not mime, anything but mime!' rest assured that *Oh* is filled with her animated voice. She just never utters a word on stage. Confused? Let me explain.

This show is an autobiographical account of Hooper's overreaction to throat surgery, during which this comedian and radio DJ was threatened with the prospect of losing her voice. It employs recorded gags from previous shows, video footage, music, dancing and yes, okay, quite a bit of mime to chronicle the events surrounding her surgery. It's also a comedic experiment in the ways we can communicate without speaking.

Hooper's performance in this show is confident and energetic. The limited amounts of 'proper' stand-up that we hear display a sharp and incisive wit. The show is cleverly structured and the multimedia aspects are well-timed. It manages to jump very quickly between diverse topics, delivered in a variety of forms, without appearing chaotic. That being said, although I could appreciate that the show was definitely daring and different, it didn't have me rolling in the aisles or wiping tears from my cheeks. Then again, I'm a bit of a traditionalist. So if you find regular stand-up comedy stilted, Claire Hooper's *Oh* will suit you.

The title of the show is appropriate for Berger's bombastic style, suggesting that she'll 'go off' with plenty of noise and excitement, and that we will be busting a gut as a result. Fans of her work won't be surprised or disappointed. The tone was intimate and familiar, and the star was warmly received by an audience of faithful devotees. After powering herself up with some 'sisterhood' music ('Respect' by Aretha Franklin), Berger launched into a scathing attack on all things evil, banal or just plain confusing. Relationships, kids, ageing, plastic surgery, the government and call centres were all given a sound pounding. When she hit her mark squarely, the explosions of laughter were satisfying and appreciative.

The downside of the title became apparent, however, as the cannon was certainly loose and the aim far from sure. The scattergun approach (Yes, it's a metaphor that just keeps giving.) was messy and the material felt a bit thin. Pretty funny, but not hilarious. It seemed Berger was too easily satisfied with the first thing that came to mind, and hadn't pushed very far to get a truly insightful or explosive observation.

The night was a comfortable cruise down Berger lane, and the comic twists and turns were mostly well handled and well-received. However, I feel she was content to take the road most travelled, barely get out of third gear, and rarely go over the speed limit. Or to return to our well-worn theme, a bit hit-and-miss.

If you've ever considered therapeutic surgery to overcome your low self-esteem, or caught your arm in the fridge door of a car door—you're probably a bit weird. You will also probably love *A Porthole into the Minds of the Vanquished*. Three men, a keyboard, and a host of sound effects expel a truly twisted, black sense of humour as they calmly but deliberately dissect the consumer culture status quo.

Borrowing from TV gameshows, advertising, news bulletins, talkback radio and magazine horoscopes, Porthole woos its complacent audience before pulling an oversized metaphorical rug from under them. The show exploits common expectations to comic effect, distorting reality into something gruesome and absurd. The actors slide seamlessly between character roles, reporting 'news' like the world's first reverse birth, before collapsing into a pair of sycophantic and masochistic clairvoyants. The sheer insanity of the dialogue, coupled with the duo's poker-faced delivery, is so wonderfully ridiculous and unsettling you'll find yourself simultaneously laughing, grimacing and shaking your head.

As the world's first comedy show devised via SMS, *Porthole* moves swiftly, leaving little time to fully digest each moment of hilarity for future regurgitation; you may find yourself hankering for a transcript after the curtains have closed. The jokes that do linger will inspire sleepless nights, as you ponder whether 'If you had one anxiety kitten, and you swapped it for two urinary budgies, would you be sick, or well?' The answer: well.

Ramblings is not only one humble piano player's strive for success in a strange and sardonic world, but it's also a journey about the many colourful characters that inhabit the other side of the planet.

After realising she's in a loveless relationship, a dejected Kristilee encounters a series of nationals (all played by Craig Blundstone nee Wellington) whilst performing all over the Northern Hemisphere as a piano bar extraordinaire. As a consequence, Kristilee struggles to endure a world in which she seems to be the hapless victim.

The story and character based cabaret style of *Ramblings* really gives the show an extra element of entertainment. Kristilee has an exceptional, strong voice and Craig's quick character adaptations are credible and endearing. They work in contrast yet complement each other. However, I thought the piano singer could have loosened up, embracing a cheekier nature and really playing it up for the audience. As for the actual performance delivery, both actors were strong, defined and obviously well rehearsed. This was their fifth or sixth performance for the night, and they certainly didn't lack any enthusiasm. Kristilee and Craig also made great use of their space, showing us how to work a room with only a piano, a wooden chair, a couple of metres of crushed velour and a dressing screen.

Ramblings is comedy for the cultured. A well worked funny script with frequent laugh out loud moments.

A few days before ANZAC day I'm waiting for Richard McKenzie in a room at the RSL Duckboard House, Paul Kelly playing through the PA, the lights dim and Paul is replaced with The Herd's cover of 'Only 19', a small screen on stage shows slide images of Australians during war. I'm feeling a bit nervous because the show is called *Digger* and my selfish relationship with ANZAC day is a public holiday.

McKenzie replaces the slides and seems a little nervous as well, but after a few minutes settles into the show. I relax a little bit too, because the show is not all about war, diggers and Australian pride. It's an entertaining personal journey into the McKenzie family's past duties with the Armed Services and is nicely rounded out with other stories about the current McKenzie on stage. There is some funny stuff in there and I'm thinking now, should I've been really laughing at Great Grandfather McKenzie's invention.

Richard McKenzie puts in a solid performance, taking the piss out his family (and himself) without dissing them. He just needs to slow down a little bit and take a deep breath. The show was delivered at breakneck speed, but with such excellent material McKenzie doesn't need to rush, maybe just one or two sips of that beer he had with him will make a good show great.



Rich Hall & Mike Wilmot

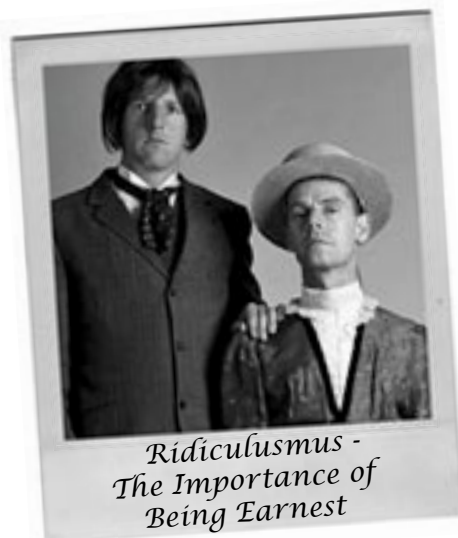
Late night stand-up in the Lower Town Hall has never been so surly, offensive and clever. Veteran comedians Rich Hall (USA) and Mike Wilmot (Canada) take the stage at 11.15pm. The show is split in half with Mike and Rich performing individual stand-up routines. Although their material differs in content, their delivery comes at you like the longing glance of a recently retrenched office worker from the end of a dark bar—and he's been drinking all day.

Rich Hall's material is well-crafted, insightful and quick-witted. His observations on politics, religion and current events are show highlights and are delivered with the stone faced bite of a drugged up pit bull. You have to be up to date with the news to get the most out of Hall's material, but if you love the sociopathic ramblings of a classic angry beer drinking comedian, don't miss this act.

Mike Wilmot is more of the same but bases the majority of his material around sucking cock, licking clit and a wonderful re-enactment of a gimp's first time. His delivery is slow, inviting the audience into a world of depravity and smart social observations. He holds you down on your knees and makes you breathe through your ears, because you're laughing too much of course.

Both Rich Hall and Mike Wilmot exude a stage presence that is confronting yet intimate. Their late night show is not for the faint hearted but leaves you laughing to the end and wanting more.

JD King



*Ridiculusmus -
The Importance of
Being Earnest*

When I saw Ridiculusmus' 2004 Comedy Festival show *Ideas Men*, one of the people I went with laughed so hard that he headbutted his own knee and broke his glasses. Our other companion ended up making inhuman human sounds whilst expelling bright rivers of snot from her nose. So when I heard that David Woods and John Haynes were going to play all nine characters in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* between the two of them, I was there.

The absurdity begins when Algernon (played by Haynes) asks his butler Lane to answer the door. 'Lane' (Woods) walks onstage, takes off his jacket, covers his bald head with a wig, and is suddenly 'Jack Worthing'. This is fine, until Algernon calls for Lane again... and so on. These increasingly rapid and unconvincing on stage costume changes are hilarious, especially when the duo has to begin cross-dressing. However, the shrick does get a bit exhausting. There were moments towards the end when it was like watching two guys in mismatched costumes reciting Wilde's play, rather than acting out distinct characters. That said, the overall effect is spectacular.

For those familiar with *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the show is an ambitious, irreverent deformation of the old classic. For the philistines who haven't seen it before (like me), the show is doubly satisfying, as Wilde's script is full of enough witticisms and twists to keep you tittering and guessing till the end.

The show isn't cheap, but it is farken brilliant.

Tom Doig



Roadhouse

'What happens in the *Roadhouse* stays in the *Roadhouse*.'

Although I have been warned against it, I feel obliged to let you know what went on all the way out there. We were on a tour bus when a terrible storm broke out. All thirty-odd of us were trapped by flooding in the middle of the outback, finding ourselves at the *Roadhouse*—a classic country pub with corrugated iron, home brew, bull horns and our 'rare and exclusive' host Evelyn (or Ev as she prefers).

The *Roadhouse* was crass as hell. It was also Aussie through and through. Into this setting stepped Lily-Anne, a loud-mouthed American traveller who loves Amway and Jesus while being an unabashed racist. Let's just say she and Ev didn't see eye to eye.

The hypocrisy and paranoia of the two characters are brilliantly portrayed by Hunter and the escalating insanity that ensues as the two characters pitch their conflicting world views against one another is well worth the ticket price.

Audience participation is crucial to the performance, so if you love having the chance to pitch your wit against the comedian on stage make sure you are front row. You may even be lucky enough to be offered an Amway sample pack to fix up that terrible complexion.

Kate Nicholson



Rock Plus Roll

Don't be confused by the show's title. *Rock Plus Roll*, by one of New Zealand's foremost male comedians, Jeremy Elwood, is not some comedic homage to Rock 'n' Roll. It actually comes from an old t-shirt of Elwood's which he stumbled across when trying to think of a name for his routine!

It is fairly apt, however, as peppered amongst the routine are his versions of popular tunes plus several of his own compositions. These are without doubt the show's strength. The improvised, genre shifting love song in particular was hilarious, and without doubt the highlight of his performance, showcasing Elwood's quick-witted improv skills.

The material and Elwood's style aren't the kind that will cause your sides to split with laughter. Rather, his audience was offered a night of constant chuckles, with rarely a silent moment in the house as the breadth of his repertoire always found some appeal. His commentary included the political, the sociological, the philosophical, to the everyday, and often underlying his jokes is a sense of prodding people to take a serious look at real and current issues.

Summing up the routine perfectly is one of Elwood's own gags. He pointed out that New Zealand's version of the '80s show *That's Incredible* was retitled *That's Fairly Interesting*. And indeed, while his show wasn't incredible, it was definitely more than fairly interesting. And for the most part, fairly funny.

Pauly B



*Ross Noble
Randomist*

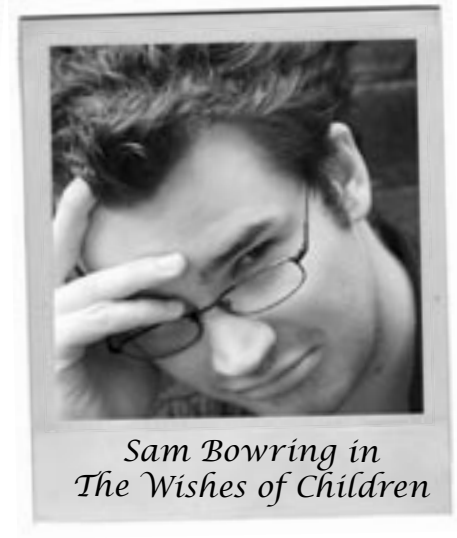
If you haven't heard the name Ross Noble in the past year or so, you must have been hiding under a rock or something else large and heavy. Judging by the size of the audience, covering a wide demographic of people, his humour reaches out to all. His quirky brand of erratic and chaotic slapstick humour takes the audience back and forth through Ross' warped and disturbed mind. Sometimes Noble seems more confused than his audience, but it's his ability to hilariously struggle out of the proverbial comedic quicksand that makes Ross Noble so brilliantly funny.

The large expanses of the Town Hall's main theatre do not diminish the bond that Ross establishes with his audience. The interaction with audience members seems to be his staple, as he is an off-the-cuff type of performer who will start a story 15 minutes into the show and finish it an hour and a half later.

There are a lot of wild tangents involving dwarfs licking chocolate off grapefruits, for example, or fish with breasts and exploding vaginas. To an Australian audience this is like Cockey's Joy on bush damper, as we're not obtuse to fart jokes and taking the piss out of other people.

Ross Noble's show is big, loud, fast paced and wildly funny. And now that Ross is spending even more time in Australia, more and more people will be converted to his seamless brand of thinking-on-your-feet comedy.

JD King



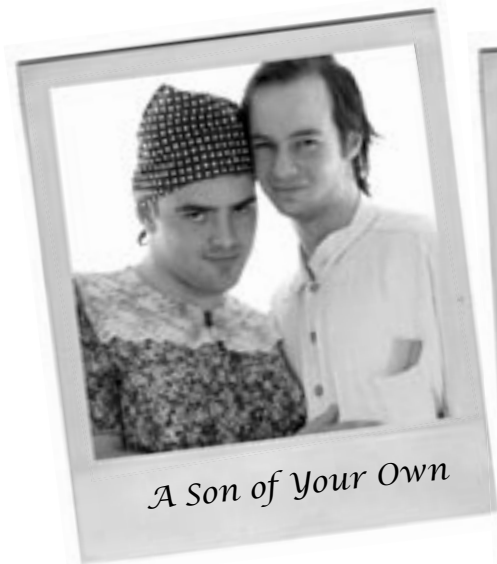
*Sam Bowring in
The Wishes of Children*

If there's one thing that really gets on my nerves, it's when I enter into a conversation at the end of a humorous story and have no idea what was so funny. Sure, it's my own fault that I wander into circles of already laughing people, demand to know what was so hilarious only to receive annoyed stares—but I do it, and being left out of the loop shits me.

Sitting in the audience at Sam Bowring's *The Wishes of Children* brought on this feeling, though in reversal. 90 per cent of the audience didn't find a joke to laugh at, but the group of 16-year-olds in the front row were having a hell of a time, whilst the rest of us looked at each other in bemusement. What was so funny? Did we miss something?

I fear the answer is No, and Sam noticed this early on and pandered to the captive teen audience who seemed to 'get' him. Perhaps the most disappointing thing about the evening was that the show had a great premise—the fantastically outlandish and beautifully innocent wishes children would make if offered them by a magic genie. Sam read these from his 'Wish Book' (an annoying prop he returned to over and over again), and they were actually the only funny parts of the show. There was too much irrelevant yelling and swearing. I found myself wishing that I could swap Sam for the little authors he quoted. Unfortunately, the genie had wisely left the building.

Caroline Buckle



A Son of Your Own

The Latch Key Group (Amos Phillips, Jordan Lee and Dylan Watson) present a hilarious look at how the media affects us in *A Son of Your Own*. When Lloyd and Erma decide to ‘adopt out’ their 24-year-old son Brian, they start a nation-wide craze that makes it fashionable to adopt out your children.

Humourously examining the way publicity and public opinion affects our decisions, these three talented comedians examine Brian’s story as other kids get the same treatment and people start rallying against ‘Mature Aged Adoption’. The comedic performances are excellent, not to mention a variety of character personas complete with foreign accents. Cutting from live theatricals to footage of pre-recorded interviews, it follows Brian’s journey as he is shunted from a ‘Czechoslovakstanian’ family to a pair of tripped-out hippies, while his parents get on happily (mostly) without him, his neighbour Des lives in his own weird world, and a crazy Fairy Godmother appears now and again attempting to guide Brian on his ‘path’.

With the three actors switching flawlessly between characters there is never a dull moment, even until the climax where everything is resolved and all the ‘important moral issues or something like it’ come to the fore. A hilarious satirical show and social commentary combined—not to be missed.

Richard Ibrahim



The Steamers

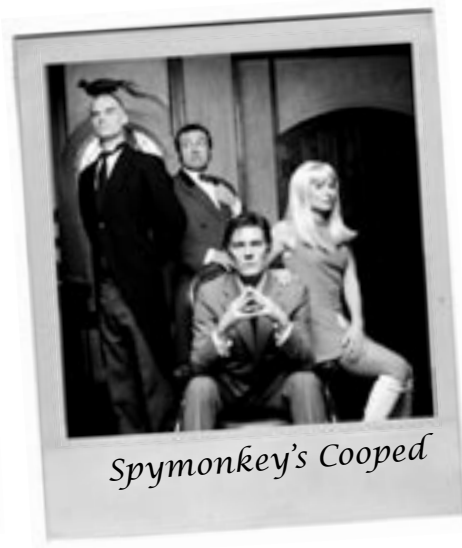
The Steamers are five comedians who have a passion for the absurd and a great amount of energy in their performance. The show was theatrical in nature, partially improvised and with some audience involvement. Recurring characters gave the show an almost filmic quality, with some characters becoming ongoing vignettes (I particularly liked the two men who worked as restaurant tables and mannequins). Format wise, the show consisted of skits interspersed with video projection. At times it was hard to see what was happening in these video clips because of poor lighting, but I was aware that the group was having technical difficulties.

The Steamers started strongly but tired towards the end of the show, leading them to fall back on gay jokes to get quick laughs. This was unfortunate as the surprising and genuinely funny skits were buried by the jokes that were offensive without being witty or clever.

I felt as though this show could have benefited from more focus and more rehearsal—because of its semi-improvised nature, the skits tended to become sprawling. Keeping them tighter would have made the jokes punchier. This was apparent in the pre-prepared video skits, some of the funnier moments, where the comedians’ work had benefited from the editing process.

I didn’t like this show. I felt that the jokes just went too far for no apparent end. However, the comedians’ energy and passion for their work was apparent and is worth seeing.

Sarah Miller



Spymonkey’s Cooped

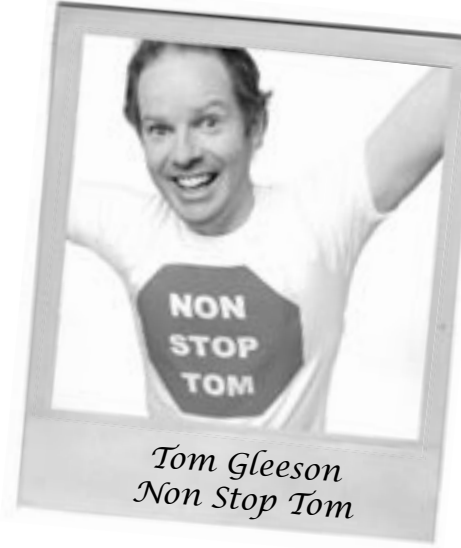
In *Cooped*, introduced as a ‘gothic romance novella’, Spymonkey play between, above and beyond the boundaries of genre in a 90 minute ode to melodrama and the absurd. Heroine Laura arrives in a mansion of mammoth proportions, beautifully depicted, however, by a set that combines the architectural skill of a primary school pantomime and nativity display.

Spymonkey develop their humour through a finely balanced combination of the anticipated and the unexpected. Who, after all, expects the characters of a Hitchcock-esque narrative to break out into a number appropriate for only the Eurovision Song Contest? The sheer physical strength of the performers provides for some brilliant moments of slapstick clowning at it’s best, in particular the seizure plagued heroine Laura (Petra Massey) and dashing Forbes Murdston (Toby Parks) embarking in a struggle that defies gravity.

At times the character filled Capitol Theatre hindered the performers as the diverse soundtrack drowned the vocal energy, leaving parts of the story difficult to follow. Their strong working history as an ensemble is evident, and with a performance history as comprehensive as the UK’s Spymonkey, it’s hard to believe they’ve never ventured to Australia before now.

The best moments within the show occur as the ensemble surprise each other and, although resulting in a momentary break of focus, is a delectable display of the joy the performers experience when working together, a laughter that is inevitably contagious.

Nicolette Minster



*Tom Gleeson
Non Stop Tom*

Tom Gleeson presents *Non Stop Tom*, a title seemingly derived from Gleeson’s flowing ramble of thoughts, jokes and storytelling. Audience participation is essential, as Tom reveals that he is using this year’s Comedy Festival as an opportunity to search for a girlfriend he can talk about in his act.

Not afraid to go off on a tangent that, somehow, always leads back to the core theme of the show, Gleeson suggests a makeover for Australia, ponders about the life of Superman in country Australia, and marvels at the wonders of a summer holiday in Tasmania.

We are then guided through life over thirty, which Gleeson implores us to embrace as he has—despite the tendency to suffer from gut wrenching hangovers, back problems, and grumpy neighbour syndrome.

Gleeson, spurred on by the presence of an accountant in the audience, even proves that maths has a place in comedy as he indulges in a series of maths jokes. It is hard not to be impressed by Gleeson’s ability to draw together a performance based around the participation of his potential audience girlfriends.

But perhaps the most comical part of Gleeson’s performance is his facial expressions that readily convey the punchlines to the audience in a truly hilarious manner. The entire show is perfectly complimented by Gleeson’s hysterical rendition of James Blunt’s ‘You’re Beautiful’—in fact, it’s this song that makes *Non Stop Tom* a ‘must see’.

Jade Gulliver



Two Collars

Two collars is ocker, stand-up about sport, terrorism, and sex, delivered by two affable blokes in jeans in t-shirts. Though likely to raise a few laughs, this is pretty fatigued material. The simplistic and basic humour about dating and Ian Thorpe’s sexual preferences is likely to be appealing to those who like traditional and straight forward stand-up. However for others, the show may lack originality and inventiveness. The comedians are seemingly unable or unwilling to take the act into any unexpected terrain or use a more

complex or tangential joke structure.

They partially compensate with enthusiasm, confidence and sheer determination, which does pay off with the small audience. Laughter is loud, and the good natured audience is responsive. The baiting of a table of shy young film students from VCA, sitting silently and awkwardly in the front, is a little bullying, but also guiltily funny. Of the two, Mick Alford’s act is the stronger, and offers more insight; his musical interludes are a good idea, but need developing. Doug Chappel often veers too far into lazy politically incorrect humour lacking the comic dexterity essential in any descent into wrongness (The finale involving a fictional male Indian telephone sex worker set comedy back 30-years.).

There’s nothing new here, the jokes are excessively literal. Nevertheless, this is home-grown humour, which is delivered competently and naturally, and you can’t fault them for that. Sunday nights’ shows are followed by improvisational comedy from Melbourne troupe *The Crew*, which is definitely worth sticking around for.

Ronan Macewan

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Vena Und Schnitzel's World Calypso Experience Tonight!

A lot of effort goes in to putting on a comedy show. People write, rehearse, and arrange technical staff, equipment, costumes and make-up. They print up posters, they leaflet the streets, they harangue their friends all to make their show a success. So it's so sad that sometimes the shows turn out to be just awful.

2006 *Vena Und Schnitzel's World Calypso Experience Tonight!* is one of the worst things I have ever seen at a comedy festival. Ill-conceived, unfunny and downright offensive, it's hard to see why anyone would have thought this was a good idea. A confused and bewildering premise leads to a seemingly endless series of 'shocking' cabaret acts and video link-ups, each more tedious than the last. It's all shock value with nothing to say—is this a comment on the media? On globalisation? On anything at all? After an hour of badly trying to recreate 'The League Of Gentlemen' the show commits the ultimate comedy crime of outright plagiarism (remember the episode when Papa Lazarou is kidnapping people, genetically modifying them and putting them in his circus? So do Vena und Schnitzel).

If you liked 'Miss Itchy' you may get something out of this, but really...I should mention the positive aspects of the show, so here they are—there are a few nice uses of wordplay, some very good keyboard playing, and the wigs are great.

John Richards



Wendy Little in 'Limited Sedition'

Sedition is a topic ripe for comic exploitation. What's not funny about lengthy and complex legislation designed to curtail our freedom of expression? It's got 'comedy gold' stamped all over it in red bureaucratic ink. Well, Wendy Little certainly thinks so. In her one-woman show *Limited Sedition*, Little bounds around a cluttered stage filled with props and costumes as she attempts to bring the Seven Acts of Sedition to life. She forecasts the impact of the new laws, before detailing how best to break them in public, and preferably while wearing a silly outfit. She even

cracks out an overhead projector and subjects the audience to a PowerPoint presentation of 'Sedition for Dummies'.

Although the show stumbled at times (Audio snippets weren't always on cue, and Little seemed occasionally under-rehearsed.) Limited Sedition's content is timely and wickedly rebellious. Her heart is definitely in the right place, even if her props aren't. As a result of the sedition amendment, Australian comics may find themselves hamstrung in their attempts to hang shit on the state. Comedians are apparently no longer allowed to sing about Alexander Downer smearing mayonnaise all over his body and letting his constituents lick it off. But this is exactly what Little does. Slagging-off ASIO and humorously unAustralian lyrics for our national anthem might also attract unwanted attention from Canberra.

Yes, Little may have employed tenuous segues to include her earlier material; yes, she accidentally dropped her plectrum inside her guitar, but she is refreshingly frank, passionate and well-informed.

Brianna Summers

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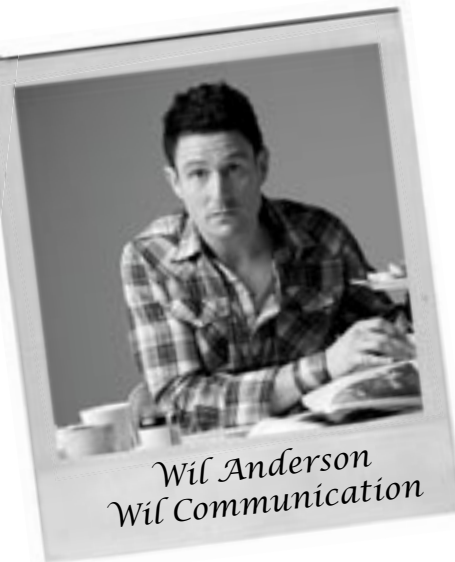


What's New Peter Costello Whoa Whoa!

Question: How can the Federal Opposition party unseat the incumbent and unflappable Prime Minister John Howard? **Answer:** Emulate Treasurer Peter Costello's tactics—and become a showbiz superstar.

At first, it seems like a preposterous proposal. But according to Jim Jones MP—member for Kalgoorlie (and love child of Tom Jones)—it's the only way forward for the directionless Labor cohort. Jim (played by Jim Lawson) firmly believes that the current crop of Labor politicians are severely lacking in star quality—a trait inherent in our Federal Treasurer. How could we forget the charisma exuding from Mr Costello as he appeared on the 'Mornings with Kerri-Anne' show, enveloped by a boa constrictor? These types of antics are used as an instructive manual for members of the Opposition as they battle in vain for federal power. The audience (or, members of the Opposition faction) are treated to motivational speeches and a litany of musical numbers, notably 'Iran, Iraq' (to the tune of 'New York, New York'), or the unnerving brilliance of 'What's New Peter Costello Whoa Whoa!' The latter number sees Jim reduced to a lusty, ravenous caveman, unable to contain his libidinous desire for Costello's 'smirky-smirk'. One feels flustered at the very thought of it! There's a fair degree of audience participation, especially since there were only five people watching the show at the time of review. Consequently, the atmosphere was lacking, and a few gags failed to reach their potential as a result. It's a shame, really, because it was an intelligent show—it just needed a greater audience to ensure maximum impact on delivery.

Gillian Terzis



*Wil Anderson
Wil Communication*

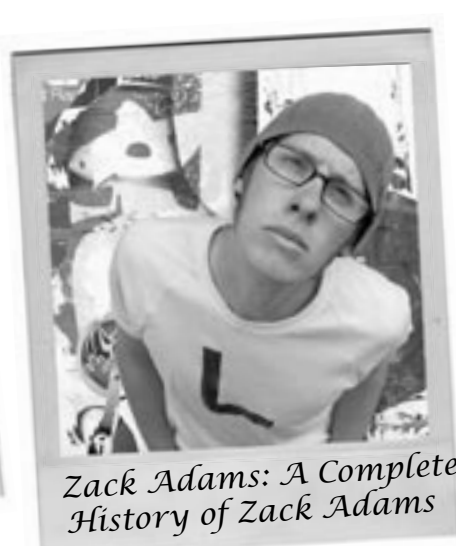
Wil Anderson. A lot of words, a lot of them funny. A quick talking political assessment of the world according to Wil. Among the fat jokes and sexual innuendo, however, is a real desire to promote a conscience.

Although the show pivots on Shannon Noll, Shane Warne, Amanda Vandstone and Lil' Johnny, there is a surprising amount of mileage with Wil's spin on these Australian comedic staples. Wil sprays the audience with an absolute barrage of words, cutting himself off mid-sentence to take us down yet another path of political observation.

This man has thought long and hard about the state of this country and the road we're all heading down, and this show is a veritable 'how to' guide for race relations and political reform. Wil seems well travelled, well read and well-informed but with a deep desire to scull a beer and yell, 'Show us your tits!'

There's a lot to be learnt from this man if you don't mind following him down numerous paths. Wil spends an hour teaching the audience what it means to be Australian, everything from a drunken souvlaki to dodging jail with a burka. Wil Anderson would be the first to say not buying a ticket to his show would just be unAustralian.

Nick Edwards



Zack Adams: A Complete History of Zack Adams

A Complete History of Zack Adams must be seen by anyone who's ever had a dream or just wants to know which word rhymes with 'leotard'. This performer's pathos-littered climb to superstardom starts at a year two assembly and crosses continence and continents, then ends a short but sweet hour later, leaving you wanting more.

According to his publicity, Adams is 'a self-proclaimed visionary...possibly a genius'. He's actually the creation of Western Australian actor Shane Adamczak, who lends his wide range, comic timing and suitably goofy physicality to Zack for the evening. For less than the price of a movie ticket you get a maudlin tutorial in stand-up, featuring music and partial nudity and touching on reality TV and interpretive dance for good measure. Bar Open's cosy upstairs lounge allows a readily accessible performance for a receptive audience.

Throughout the show I found myself giggling along with everyone else. The only problem was that Zack is so endearingly clueless that laughing during this emotional rollercoaster occasionally felt like kicking a puppy (or clubbing a baby seal), especially when you know so many other 'Zacks' are out there. Schadenfreude aside, this character's appeal shines through Adamczak's earnest yet well-controlled performance.

If you've ever felt out of your depth (Who hasn't?), you'll find this show and its resolution uplifting. Here's hoping Zack's next show provides a couple more guilt-free laughs... although with the promise of 'both ninjas and robots', who could resist?

Deanne Chiu



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